



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Cold, with snow in the east

(145p) 40p



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looks back at
the future PAGE 13



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Stewart, saviour
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Could this be the face of '97 – or just an 'untried, inexperienced' dummy?

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

The Prime Minister's New Year message to Tory constituents criticising Tony Blair's Shadow Cabinet as "untried, inexperienced" and "too risky" was attacked by Labour last night as the opening shot of a "dirty war" to "get Blair".

Conservative Party leaders denied they were mounting a smear campaign against the Labour leader to overtake Labour's massive lead in the polls, but all the signs are that the New Year will see one of the dirtiest battles ever witnessed at a British election.

Conservatives sources told *The Independent* that the Prime Minister was against personal attacks on Mr Blair but went on to accuse the Labour leader of "hypocrisy" over abortion, saying he opposed it, after voting to preserve a legal right to abortion.

As Cardinal Basil Hume, the Roman Catholic leader in England and Wales, threatened to make abortion an election issue, a ministerial aide, Dr Robert Spink accused Mr Blair of "breathtaking hypocrisy" on abortion.

Mr Blair is also likely to be accused of hypocrisy over his choice of an "opt-out" school for his son Euan. A Tory source said: "Education is very fruitful territory... We have a new advertising campaign but it is no more negative than the Labour Party's. They showed giants trampling across Britain, and old ladies being strangled. They are just putting the fear of God up people. They cannot claim the high moral ground."

However, John Prescott, the deputy leader of the Labour Party, told *The Independent*: "Mr Major's New Year's message is the start of a £7m smear campaign to get Blair, financed by sleazy foreign companies to blight election year 1997." He said it was part of a "dirty war".

In his New Year Message, Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader accused the two parties of competing for office by saying as little as substance as possible – and Britain heading for its least intelligent election ever.

Mr Blair in his own New Year mes-

The Big Mac generation

"I think it's time for a change"
"With Labour we would be going into the realms of the unknown"

First-time voters, who have known only a Conservative-ruled Britain, air their views. page 6

sage today will call for an early general election to capitalise on Labour's conviction that the delay in going to the country is paralysing

government.

He will reassure Labour supporters that he will take every opportunity to force an election by bringing down the Government in the Commons. "He will take every opportunity to get them out before time. The drift and weak leadership is damaging Britain and he will set out a positive agenda of new Labour policies," said a Labour source.

But Labour is sticking to its strategy of only tabling a "no confidence" motion to bring down the Government when it thinks it can win the Commons vote. Mr Major enters the New Year without a Commons majority for the first time since Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, but is still hoping to hold on until an election on 1 May with the help of the Ulster Unionists.

The Prime Minister's message to constituency chairmen clearly signalled that he intends to use the promise of a tough negotiating stance at the European inter-governmental conference in Amsterdam to silence criticism from his own Euro-sceptic Tory MPs, and portray Mr Blair as a soft touch in Europe.

"I have one overriding principle in my policy towards Europe – to put the British interest first. That is the best policy for Britain and our party," Mr Major said.

"I will firmly resist any policies that would damage Britain's prosperity or result in a significant shift of power to Brussels. If Britain goes federal, Britain will not follow."

If Tony Blair represented Britain in Amsterdam he would surrender



Model leader? A waxen image of Tony Blair's face in production for Madame Tussauds, London. Living proof of a new look, page 5

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

The Prime Minister focused on the central message in the Tories' election campaign – don't throw it all away – which will be used to counter Labour's most potent weapon, that it is "time for a change". Hailing the success in the economy, Mr Major highlighted five threats repre-

sents a Labour victory, of higher taxes, prices and mortgages, fewer jobs, and a federal Europe.

A Tory leadership source said: "The campaign will not be aimed at Blair specifically. The Prime Minister feels very strongly about that. We will be campaigning around the is-

facing agonisingly difficult personal decisions. He doesn't believe the criminal law is the right instrument to take away that choice."

"His voting record is entirely consistent with that."

Abortion row, page 2

Leading article, page 12

Labour pulls back from union curb

Steve Clement and
Colin Brown

The Labour leadership has quietly abandoned plans for a crackdown on unions in the public sector.

Despite a spate of union-busting which dominated the headlines at the time of the party and TUC conferences, Tony Blair has decided that plans for what were seen as "no strike" rules were impractical.

The decision follows a brief insulation period in which the initiative was comprehensively withdrawn from nearly every sector, including the Labour

leader's own colleagues in the Shadow Cabinet.

However, the continuing tensions between the two wings of the labour movement emerged again yesterday when a return to "beer and sandwiches" under a Blair government was ruled out by Stephen Byers, a Labour spokesman on employment.

Mr Byers rejected plans being drawn up by John Edmunds, leader of the GMB general union, disclosed in the *Independent on Sunday*, for the restoration of tripartite forums between unions, the Government and employers.

"We have no proposals to es-

tablish the sort of machinery that is referred to in John Edmunds's memorandum.

"We don't believe by setting up a whole machinery of government is the best way forward. It's far better to create the climate in which employers and trade unions can work together to achieve mutual objectives," Mr Byers said on BBC radio.

Mr Edmunds is proposing the revival of a forum on the lines of the National Economic and Development Council (NEDC), abolished by Baroness Thatcher.

Meanwhile, in his New Year

message the TUC general secretary, John Monks, urged the unions to make "big changes" to offer the fullest contribution to a future Labour government.

He said they would have to break the habit of being in opposition and move to being part of the solution to Britain's problems in the election year.

Mr Monks said Britain desper-

ately needed a new government, but a Labour victory would only be the beginning of new challenges for unions.

"Unions need to make big changes if they are to make the fullest contribution – moving from a position where at best we

have been ignored and at worst treated as the enemy within will not be easy. Habits of opposition will have to be broken."

And on BBC Radio 5 Live yesterday Mr Monks said a Labour government would not be involved in "backstairs deals" with the unions, but he added: "There will be a climate in which the government of the day is not hostile."

However, he said the unions would not get "everything they want, it certainly won't be that".

The idea of that compulsory binding arbitration might be used to keep the lid on union unrest under a Labour govern-

ment was floated last September by David Blunkett, the party's chief spokesman on education and employment.

Following a furious response from unions Mr Blunkett subsequently called for the greater use of voluntary arbitration agreements leading to a deal which would be binding on both sides.

Unions pointed out that such a policy could lead to a tidal wave of arbitration. Under such a system unions would have little incentive in submitting sensible claims if they felt that an arbitrator might split the difference between the two sides.

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Couple die trying to save dog in icy lake

Louise Jury

A couple died yesterday after falling into an icy lake while trying to rescue their dog. Two passers-by who tried to help them suffered hypothermia.

The deaths of William and Jill Willis, both 58, came only two days after the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) warned people not to venture on to frozen water.

The tragedy also followed the Boxing Day death of Tony Rees, 52, who crashed through a frozen pond in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, trying to save a spaniel.

The latest accident happened at Belhus Wood Country Park, Aveley, near Grays, Essex, where the temperature was below freezing yesterday. An Essex police spokesman said it appeared the dog went on to the lake, fell through the ice and became trapped.

The man, in attempting to rescue the dog, also fell into the lake. The woman attempted to rescue him and also fell in. Two passers-by tried to rescue them, but did not succeed. Emergency workers fought to save the couple, who came from Upminster, in Essex.



Mrs Willis, a law firm clerk, was taken from the water after 45 minutes by firefighters. Electric shocks were used to restart her heart and she was flown by air ambulance to the Royal London Hospital in east London, but died shortly afterwards.

Her husband, a painter and decorator, was trapped in the 12-foot deep lake for more than two hours and was declared dead at the scene after his body was retrieved.

They had two sons, Steven, 32, and Richard, 30. Steven said yesterday:

"They were a loving couple who had thirty-odd years of marriage together, and at least they are together now. That's the only comfort we can take from it."

The black Labrador dog, Tara, which the couple had owned for about a year, escaped from the lake by itself and was being cared for yesterday in kennels.

The middle-aged married couple who tried to help Mr Willis were taken to Oldchurch Hospital in Romford suffering from the effects of the cold.

Yet within minutes of Mr Willis's body being found, two children had followed their pet spaniel on to the ice at Belhus Park. Their father quickly called them safety when informed of the incident.

"It never occurred to me that they were in danger on the ice, it looks so thick," he said.

A RoSPA spokesman said that more than half of ice-related drownings involved an attempted rescue of another person or of a dog.

"People should not even test the thickness of the ice with their toes, let alone venture out on to the ice," he said.

"The chances of anyone surviving when immersed in very cold water are extremely slim."

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Nurses 'argued before killing' in Saudi

Michael Streeter

The two British nurses accused of murdering a colleague in Saudi Arabia argued with her about her age shortly before she was killed, it was claimed yesterday.

The Saudi newspaper *Al-Hayat* said that during the row 55-year-old Australian nurse Yvonne Gilford was struck over the head with a teapot, and then

stabbed with a knife she had used to defend herself.

Ms Gilford was taunted with being an "old lady" who would soon be sent home because of her age, the article said, quoting Saudi police sources.

The newspaper, which is regarded as close to official thinking, said one of the two nurses confessed to the murder shortly after she was arrested by police

on 20 December, allegedly withdrawing cash from Ms Gilford's bank account.

Officers had been keeping watch on a cash dispensing machine after money went missing from Ms Gilford's account after the murder on 11 December. The other woman reportedly confessed two days later.

The newspaper also claims that fingerprints of only one

of the accused women were found at the victim's flat. Diplomatic sources said the pair, Lucy McLaughlin, 31, from Dundee, and 41-year-old Deborah Parry, from the Midlands, had been escorted to the scene of the murder at the King Fahd Military Medical Complex, Dhahran, two days before Christmas where they allegedly re-enacted the crime before Saudi investigators.

Both women, who have declared their innocence in conversations with relatives, are expected to be visited in jail by Britain's consul, Tim Lamb, later today, when they will choose a lawyer to represent them.

A Foreign Office spokesman said Mr Lamb would be seeking clarification from Saudi officials about the exact wording of the murder allegation and whether there were any "ancillary" charges — a reference to the numbers of theft.

The spokesman added that the intervention by the Saudi ambassador to Britain, Dr Ghazi Al-Osabli, on Saturday, had been "helpful", especially his comments that the death sentence was by no means automatic even for those found guilty of murder.



Air of realism: Detail of a crew member from a model of a Vickers Wellington bomber on display at the International Model Show at Olympia, west London, which runs until Saturday and which is expected to attract some 50,000 visitors

Photograph: Tony Buckingham

Tory issues abortion threat

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

A ministerial aide yesterday said he would spoil his ballot paper rather than vote for a Tory election candidate who supported abortion.

The remarks by Dr Robert Spink, the Tory MP for Castle Point and a parliamentary private secretary at the Home Office, fuelled fears that abortion now threatens to become an election issue for the first time in Britain.

They followed an attack on abortion by Cardinal Basil Hume, the Archbishop of Westminster, in an interview on GMTV: "I am quite convinced that abortion is a great evil in our society and really

Pro-life and pro-choice camps reveal party splits as ministerial aide reinforces Cardinal's remarks

unworthy of a civilised society." As the leading Roman Catholic cleric in Britain, the Archbishop will give strength to the Pro-Life Alliance, which is threatening to field up to 50 candidates at the election to make abortion now threaten to become an election issue.

"There's no way in which the church will change its attitude towards that, and I think in future generations we'll be pleased that somebody has stood very firm on that issue," Cardinal Hume said.

Dr Spink, a PPS to Anne Widdecombe, the Home Office minister who converted to

Catholicism, said he would not vote for a Tory candidate who was "pro-choice".

He said on GMTV: "I would find it very difficult to vote for the Tory candidate ... I would probably personally spoil my paper."

He added: "We have abortion virtually on demand. I believe politicians should look at abortion laws and tighten it up. The abortion of one twin while the other twin was left in a mother's womb was an abomination and should not have happened."

Tory leaders said last night

that if abortion became an election issue, it would damage the Labour Party more than the Conservatives, who had fewer supporters of the campaign for a woman's right to choose.

A Tory source said: "If you look at the two parties, there are more [pro-choice] MPs on the other side. They have more women MPs who are obviously pro-choice and they have Emily's List [a campaigning group to get more Labour women elected]."

The Labour frontbencher, Clare Short, attacked the Cardinal's views saying the Catholic

church's attitude had cost it the support of her generation of women.

Ms Short — who had a strict Catholic upbringing — and her ex-husband gave up their son, Toby, for adoption when he was six months old. She was reunited with him in October.

Ms Short said yesterday: "It's very sad that the Catholic church retreats back on to this territory. It lost almost all the women of my generation because of its attitude to sex. They suggest that abortion is the primary moral question; it is not."

She described the church's view of morality as "distorted" and said she favoured a law regulating the availability of abortion but leaving it to the individual to make her choice.

The Department of Health said the current number of cases was below epidemic level.

In a bad year — such as 1989, when 25,000 Britons died of flu — infection rates can exceed 400 out of every 100,000.

Ruth Ashmore, of the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, said: "We issued an appeal over local radio for nurses on duty to come in and help out."

"It is not a nice thing to do, because ours ... deserve their holidays, but it is proving difficult because of staff sickness and sheer patient numbers. We have had to open some surgical beds to general patients, because there are so many of them."

The flu scare came as icy weather sent temperatures plunging to -7C in parts of the country, even the River Thames froze over in places. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents warned that appearances could be deceptive, and that no one should assume ice was thick enough to stand their weight.

According to the London Weather Centre, today would bring more "bitterly cold" conditions.

GPs set to make pay a poll issue

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Leaders of Britain's 30,000 family doctors are threatening to make public-sector pay rises an election issue unless the Government conceded big "catching up" increases in the November Budget.

The Cabinet faces the dilemma of imposing pay restraint, weeks before the election, on 5 million public-sector workers, including GPs, after MPs awarded themselves a rise of 26 per cent this year.

Reports of the pay-review bodies for public-sector workers, including doctors, nurses, teachers, civil servants, judges and the armed forces, are due to be delivered to Downing Street by the end of next month.

Last night GPs said they will be in the vanguard of protests if their demands for big rises go unheard. The British Medical Association has told the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body that doctors need a 58 per cent pay rise in April to catch up with rises for similar groups in the private sector over the past 10 years. "It is going to be very rocky. Every year it has been getting worse."

The Government may think that the doctors will be quiet, but there could well be more trouble because of the coming election, "said a BMA source. Ministers, who have been trying to mollify GPs with a White Paper promising other changes, privately admit rises higher than inflation will be needed.

But the Treasury is determined to hold down public-sector pay, only allowing rises financed by productivity.

The Treasury made an implicit threat that inflationary pay awards in the health service could hit patient care.

The BMA is seeking to head off threats by representatives of the GP fundholders that they would pull out from the NHS if Labour went ahead with plans to replace funding holding with a new system of joint commissioning for services from hospitals by groups of GPs covering an area. The BMA is seeking talks with Chris Smith, Labour's health spokesman, to clarify his policy on replacing funding holding by GPs, which he set out last month.

The National Association of Fundholding Practitioners is due this week to release its response, rejecting his plans.

But weekend reports that fundholders were threatening to quit the NHS were dismissed as "pejorative". A BMA spokesman said: "There is a lot of confusion about Labour's plans but GPs are not going to leave the NHS. GPs have around 1,800 patients on their lists. It would mean they would all have to be prepared to pay a substantial sum for their health care in addition to pay for the NHS through their taxes."

"GPs are so well-entrenched in the NHS, through pay and allowances, despite low morale, to talk about walking out. It is just not feasible."

significant shorts

Threat to life of Sinn Fein leader

Police fear missing wife is dead

Detectives trying to identify cremated human remains found in the boot of a car after businessman Derek Levon shot himself were yesterday examining a burned area near his farm. Experts were trying to establish whether the ashes and bone fragments found in a tin box were the remains of Mr Levon's wife, Pauline, who had cancer.

Mr Levon, 61, shot himself in front of a police car at his farm near Witheridge, Devon, last Friday, hours after his house in Silverton 10 miles away was destroyed by fire.

Det Sgt John Smith told a news conference in Exeter yesterday that the police would like to hear from anyone who saw smoke or fires in the area of the farm since Saturday 21 December, when Mrs Levon, also in her sixties, was last seen.

£12m rail plan for Peaks

Derbyshire County Council is urgently seeking financial help — including National Lottery cash — for the biggest-ever transport infrastructure scheme in the Peak District.

National Park: A study says the £12m scheme to reopen 20 miles of track from Buxton to Matlock would attract 200,000 passengers a year and relieve tourist pressure on one of Britain's most picturesque but packed beauty spots.

This project would provide a vital link for the area and take cars and heavy lorries off the road, "said council leader Martin Doughty. "By working in co-operation with other local authorities and rail-operating companies, we hope to be able to attract funding and make progress with this exciting scheme."

Rise in illegal entry cases

The number of alleged illegal immigrants increased by 40 per cent last year, according to Home Office statistics. Illegal-entry action was initiated against 10,381 people in 1995, but only 3,020 were removed or voluntarily left the country, a 7 per cent drop.

According to the annual report of the Home Office's Immigration and Nationality Directorate, the decline in removals was due to an increase in the proportion claiming asylum, up from 32 per cent in 1993 to 67 per cent in 1995. It noted that the largest single category of illegal entrant remained those who gained entry by deceiving an immigration officer on arrival — 35 per cent of those detected in 1995. Another 31 per cent were smuggled into the country, an 83 per cent rise.

Lottery draw

Eight tickets shared the £9.8m jackpot in Saturday's National Lottery draw with winning numbers 8, 10, 20, 27, 31 and 39; bonus, 30.

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Cuba p Britis in war

Smuggler in move to new coca

The tra are en political in ord state ti

news

Cuba posting for British police in war on drugs

Two Scotland Yard officers are going to Cuba as part of an offensive to close down drug smuggling routes through the Caribbean to Britain, Home Office minister Tom Sackville announced yesterday.

In a separate move, the Foreign Office has also announced that it is planning to take new powers to crack down on money laundering in the five Caribbean dependent territories.

Mr Sackville, who speaks Spanish, agreed to send the police officers after a meeting with President Fidel Castro, the revolutionary leader, in Cuba last month, where he signed a Customs and Excise co-operation pact.

"I had a hunch that Cuba was straight and they were making an effort to tackle the drugs problem," the Home Office minister told *The Independent*.

"They are a key player in the transit, both in airports and in

Joint initiative aims to check Caribbean smuggling route. Colin Brown reports

marine transport, and we need to work as close as possible with them to combat the trafficking."

Mr Sackville, only the second minister in 25 years to visit Cuba – the first was Ian Taylor, the trade and industry minister – came back convinced that Cuba was committed to combating the drugs trade and could be trusted with intelligence sharing.

Cuba is being targeted by the drug barons in South America because its waters are barred to the US Coastguard. Drugs are dropped off by light aircraft, and picked up from the water to be shipped on to Europe through Cuban ports.

Britain was wary of exchanging intelligence with some other countries in the area, where ministers and officials can be corrupted by the huge

volume of money associated with drugs. The Cuban leader made little small talk in their meeting, but in a lengthy speech denounced drug trafficking as a crime against the revolution, and committed his authorities to co-operating with British police and customs officers to prevent Cuba being used for the transfer of drugs from Colombia to Europe.

British intelligence helped in the seizure by the US Coastguard of a massive shipment of six tons of cocaine via Cuba. In a breakthrough in US-Cuban relations, Cuban officials are ready to testify against the smugglers in a trial early in the new year in the United States.

But the British government also fears that not enough is being done to combat the laundering of the money from the drugs trade through offshore banks in Caribbean countries. Britain has already introduced its own legislation to extend the powers of seizure and disclosure for bank accounts believed to be used in money laundering.

Foreign Office sources yesterday confirmed that Britain is considering extending its powers to introduce the same anti-laundering measures in the five dependent territories – the Cayman Islands, Bermuda, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Montserrat, and the British Virgin Islands.

The Cayman Islands, world-famous for its banking, and Bermuda have already begun action against money laundering through their banks. But the Government fears some of the other islands need to take more action.

The aim is to persuade the countries to carry out action voluntarily. It will be one of the priorities for the new governor of the Turks and Caicos, John Kelly, an expert on the Caribbean, who took over recently from Martin Bourke.

Common purpose: Tom Sackville meeting President Fidel Castro during his visit to Cuba last month

Smugglers look east in move to establish new cocaine route

Matthew Brace

The South American drug cartels are spreading their smuggling operations from Central America and the western Caribbean to the 29 countries of the eastern Caribbean stretching from Surinam to the British Virgin Islands.

Tightened security in the established cocaine conduit areas have forced the drug cartels to change tack and now it is feared they will exploit the eastern Caribbean's comparative unfamiliarity with drug smuggling by flooding the new route with drugs for Britain, the rest of Europe and the United States.

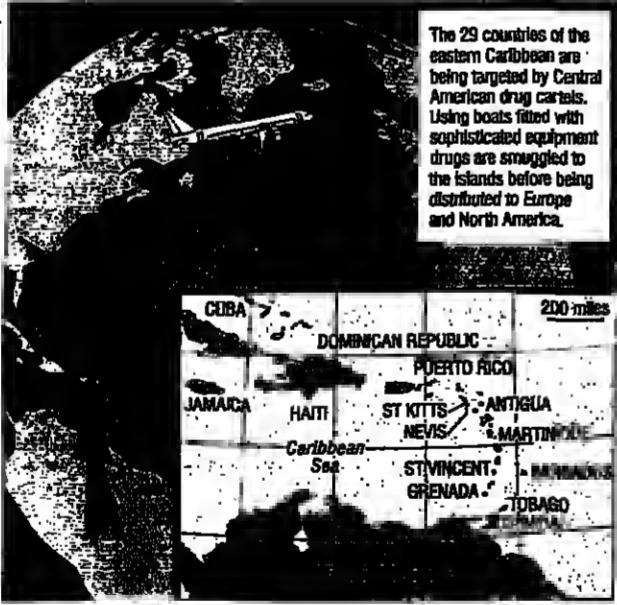
Evidence from the United Nations Drug Control Programme, based in Barbados and funded chiefly by the British government, shows that 180 tonnes of cocaine were smuggled into Europe from South America via the eastern Caribbean this year – roughly 50 kilos a day. About 60 per cent came via Britain, arriving on cargo ships and passenger flights.

As much as nine-fifth of the Europe-bound total is estimated to have travelled with couriers – sometimes holidaymakers – and it is believed there could be as many as three cocaine runs a week to Britain.

Many more British holidaymakers are taking advantage of lower holiday prices in the Caribbean and despite a graphic film now showing on flights from the UK warning of the penalties of drug smuggling, several are ignoring the risks and carrying consignments of cocaine back to Britain.

The director of the UN programme in Barbados, Dr Santo Calvani, said the narcotics trade is like a balloon.

"You squeeze it here and it pops over there. As their routes have been closed down the narco-traffickers have been pushed further and further east so these islands are now beginning to see a lot more drug activity," he said. He added that 1997 will be a crucial year in the fight against trafficking which would only be won if all the east-



Caribbean nations worked together to stifle the threat:

With limited resources, however, and some countries only having one or two patrol boats to try to intercept the powerful speedboats of the smugglers, they seem outgunned.

The traffickers are eager for political power in order to dictate the rules of the game'

Barbados is a prime target for the traffickers. As the Caribbean's most easterly outpost with arguably the best air and sea freight facilities in the region and close trade links with Britain, it serves their purpose well. Despite the island having some of the toughest drug penalties in the region, 827 drug cases were recorded up to the end of October 1996, against 745 cases for the entire year 1995. Twelve tonnes of cocaine

found in a cargo ship in Spain last month were traced back to the island and in London in December 1994, £1m worth of cocaine was seized on a British Airways flight from the island.

Other islands in the Leeward and Windward chain are also at risk. A recent Internet advertisement promoted Antiguan money-laundering services by promising "We handle cash derived from ANY activity." And a string of recent murders and disappearances in St Kitts was also linked with trafficking.

An EU report on the current crisis highlighted the islands' vulnerability and warned that it posed a threat to the region's democracy. Weak economies, underpaid and demoralised officials and low counter-narcotics expenditure were laying eastern Caribbean states wide open to the traffickers.

Dr Calvani fears that the drug barons may soon infiltrate the political arena. "Whereas traffickers in the past have been interested solely in the business side of their trade, now they are also eager for political power," he said. "They want to gain this power in order to dictate the rules of the game."



Against all odds: Andrew Robinson, who suffers from a rare form of autism, sits surrounded by his books; this year he beat thousands of students to medals from the country's largest A-level examination board. Photograph: News Team

Autistic boy top of the class

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

A student born with a rare form of autism which rules out everyday tasks such as making a cup of tea, has beaten thousands of other teenagers to score among the country's top A-level results.

Nineteen-year-old Andrew Robinson celebrated Christmas with three medals from the country's largest A-level exam board – one for gaining the highest mark nationally in general studies and the others for coming within the top five candidates in two other subjects.

The achievements mark a milestone in an educational career which saw him removed from junior school at seven. The boy who couldn't mix with his classmates left specialists divided – some thought he was gifted while others saw bad behaviour.

Six years later, Andrew was diagnosed as suffering from Asperger's syndrome, a little-understood form of autism causing obsessional behaviour and difficulties with relationships. Yet the condition also revealed itself in a startling academic ability. With the help of 15 hours a week home tuition, he gained five GCSEs and a sixth-form place at the tertiary college near his Derby home, setting him on the path to the awards from the Associated Examining Board.

Now in the first year of a degree in politics at Nottingham University, Andrew said: "Asperger's has given me abilities as well as disabilities."

Among his strengths are tremendous powers of critical analysis. But any subject involving sheer description or learning by rote is out of reach, ruling out maths, technology or languages.

Andrew's parents face the reality of a disorder which saw their son score highest among more than 18,000 candidates, yet which means they must continue to care for him.

His father, Graham, speaks of Andrew's "amazing ability to focus ... But that tunnel vision is part of the problem. He can tell you all about Karl Marx but he can't make a cup of tea."

NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST MAGAZINE

John doesn't get it

A woman and her nine-year-old daughter raped by an man who threatened her with a knife will never recover from their ordeal, a child psychologist said last night.

Despite years of therapy, the 53-year-old woman and her child – assaulted in the early hours of Boxing Day as they slept in a north London ground-floor flat – would not escape their "intense violation," according to Professor Joan Freeman, of Middlesex University.

This will never leave them for the rest of their lives. They will never get over it. I don't think you can ever be as you were before. You have changed and it will always be there. It's not a bad cold you get over. It becomes a part of you, an experience as traumatic as this," the professor added.

Professor Freeman said the mother – who, with her daughter, was staying with a relative in Northolt for Christmas – would probably be more traumatised than the young girl.

"I think the girl stands a better chance because she's only nine and, without being disabled, children are remarkably resilient."

"But for the mother, because she was in a position of responsibility, it will be worse for her. She's got to deal with the violation of herself and of her daughter and all that guilt."

Professor Freeman, who said the couple would need at least a year to come to terms with their ordeal and might need psychotherapy every day, added: "The mother will also have a lot of guilt to deal with. She will be guilty for herself and guilty for her child."

She added that the nine-year-old's success in coming to terms with the ordeal depended on her level of security before the assault. "How well she will get over it depends on where she started from."

Police are looking for a man said to be in his early 20s, between 5ft 11ins and 6ft tall, very thin, with thin fingers, clean-shaven and with chiselled features.

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Charles backs multi-million faith centre

Louise Jury

A City highflyer's dream of creating a £120m Christian centre in London for the Millennium will move closer towards becoming reality next month.

The Millennium Commission is due to decide whether to back merchant banker Ken Costa's vision of a "thriving, ecumenical Christian community" on the south bank of the Thames.

The scheme would transform a nine-acre site near Battersea power station into a giant "village" featuring a 10,000-seat church, a base for charities working with the poor, sick and disadvantaged and short-stay accommodation for young people.

The USIT youth and student travel company would use the budget hotel and has pledged £80 million to match £30 million requested from the Millennium Commission.

If the Commission gives its backing, a planning application would be presented within months. Mr Costa and his church, the Holy Trinity Brom-

ton in Knightsbridge, London, is preparing to place an option to secure the nine-acre site by the end of January.

It is confident of raising the remaining £20 million needed from corporate and private sources.

Mark Elsdon-Dew, the project spokesman, said yesterday: "We want it to be the kind of place which people in London can be proud of."

Ken Costa, 46, vice chairman of merchant bankers SBC Warburg, and a church warden and lay preacher at Holy Trinity Brompton, the largest Anglican church in Britain, has harboured a vision of such a centre for some time, Mr Elsdon-Dew said.

But it is only in the last year that feasibility studies and plans have been drawn up and a charitable trust, Millennium Village, formed to spearhead development. Mr Costa, who has provided significant financial support, is its chairman.

The influential vicar of Holy Trinity, the Rev Sandy Millar, has secured extensive church backing. The Archbishop of

Canterbury, other leading Anglican churchmen, the Baptist and Methodist churches and Cardinal Hume, leader of the Roman Catholic church in England and Wales, have all expressed keen interest.

Prince Charles's private office is acting as consultant. Having previously called for a more spiritual approach to the Millennium celebrations, the Prince is understood to see the potential union in the scheme of two of his greatest interests – spiritual exploration and British architecture.

His office said: "The Prince welcomes the idea of building an ecumenical Christian centre ... to coincide with the beginning of the Third Millennium."

Mr Costa said: "Millennium Village is a national celebration of the Christian millennium, demonstrating the links between belief and social action in the community.

"We are also delighted to be working with the Prince of Wales Project Office to ensure that Millennium Village expresses architecturally this exciting vision of unity and reconciliation in the nation."

Roam with a view: A climber taking in the scenery at Pwll Du Bay on the Gower peninsula in South Wales

Photograph: Rob Stratton



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The Link

Right to roam' campaign faces a tough climb

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

The campaign for a public right to roam over mountain paths and an unwelcome journey through one of its most popular areas, the Brecon Beacons, has come to a standstill. The National Trust, which publishes a charter estimating the arguments of both sides, says:

Rather than legislation granting access to open country, the BMC favours an "informal approach", seeking permission to climb particular crags or walk in an area by negotiation with individual owners. The Country Landowners' Association calls it "managed access".

But to the Ramblers' Association and many climbers, the mountaineers' approach smacks of "revisionism" at precisely the wrong moment. Campaigners are anxious to hold Labour to a commitment to introduce a right to roam, subject to common sense restrictions, if it wins the general election.

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, has shown signs of wavering on a promise he has been told could alienate rural voters. The commitment, with its awkward socialist overtones, was inherited from John Smith. So far, Labour frontbenchers have insisted it will be carried through.

But the BMC's "Access Charter", and the council's respectable standing in the outdoor movement, could help Mr Blair cover any retreat.

"The charter will be used to drive a wedge into what should be a united camp," said Jim Perrin, the mountaineering author and one of climbing world's few political radicals. "It will be used to undermine the Bill."

An "inept" BMC access team had fallen for the blandishments of the CLA and a seat at the negotiating table, Mr Perrin said. "It's the traditional strategy of those in power. Let's

give these people the appearance of influence and respectability and they will be happy."

BMC and RA representatives attended the CLA's lavish Access 2000 conference last month, but only the ramblers put out a formal statement. The BMC, which publishes a charter estimating the arguments of both sides, says:

A draft of the charter does not rule out legislation but argues that access has become a much more complex issue since the 1930s – the time of mass trespasses on the Pennine moors. It calls for a "thorough review" and initiatives to "bring greater public access to both upland and lowland countryside in England and Wales in ways which are in keeping with the needs of land managers and wildlife conservation".

The BMC fears that defining open country could lead to climbers being barred from crags in lowland or cultivated areas in a "backlash" by landowners. Labour has limited options to mount and moorland; the BMC wants to add cliff and foreshore; and the RA would like to go further and include downland and forests.

A paper prepared earlier this year by Jeremy Barlow, the BMC's access officer, warned that concentrating on improved access to target sites might be seen as "provocative" and as undermining the RA's attempt to get legislation.

David Beskine, the RA's assistant director, regretted what he saw as a shift in BMC policy over the last four years.

"They're not interested in mountain walkers any more, just themselves and their friends who go climbing on individual crags. They seem happy to slip into the position as acting as the agent for restrictions. We're very sad about it," he said.

DAILY POEM

Elvis

By Stephen Knight

He's out there somewhere, in the dark –
a pair of oil-stained overalls,
a monkey wrench. When drivers park
to stretch their legs and scratch their balls

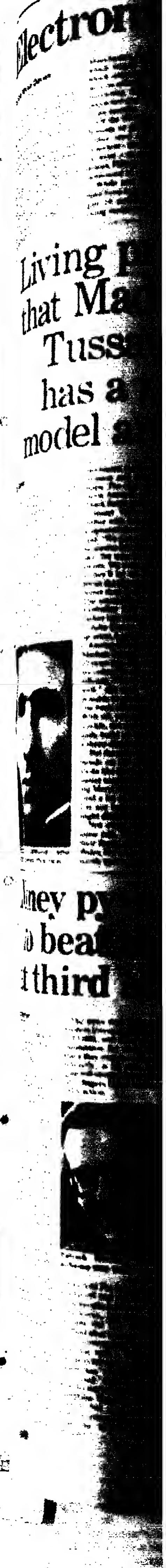
he appears with a chamois leather
in a pair of socks. He doesn't pass
the time of night, curse the weather
nor laugh; he only cleans the glass.

Bored, tired from counting off the states
they've spanned, they can't see how odd
he is, the man who never talks;

the tubby, balding guy who waits
for tips, then shrugs.

The one who walks
across the forecourt like a god.

This week and next, *The Independent* will be printing poems from the 10 volumes shortlisted for the 1996 T.S. Eliot Prize. The prize, set up by the Poetry Book Society in 1993, honours the year's best collection of new verse. It will be presented by Mrs Valerie Eliot on 13 January. "Elvis" comes from Stephen Knight's second collection, *Dream City Cinema*, published by Bloodaxe.



Electronic curfew tags fail the test of crime

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

The Home Office was forced to put on a brave face yesterday after its own research showed that a quarter of the young criminals fitted with electronic tags in pilot schemes had breached their orders.

The study, published today, also reveals that each of the electronic monitoring orders are likely to be costing the taxpayer more than four times the cost of putting the offenders on probation.

The report examines the first full year of trial schemes into the use of the American-style tags in Greater

Manchester, Norfolk and Berkshire which began in July 1995, under which courts can impose curfew orders on offenders aged 16 and over restricting their liberty from between two and 12 hours a day for up to six months.

Of the 83 tagged, mostly for dishonesty or possession of drugs, 19 either tore off their electronic bracelets – fitted either to the ankle or wrist – or committed other offences. Fifteen were subsequently sentenced to custody.

While just 236 young criminals have been tagged since the pilots began 18 months ago, with 91 still being monitored, Securicor Custodial Services, the private security firm which monitors the schemes in Greater Manchester and Reading, Berkshire, claimed yesterday that the research had judged the US import a success.

But there was a lower-key response from Baroness Blatch, the Home Office minister, who said: "As the report makes clear, tagging can be a worthwhile community sentence. Tagging represents a useful additional sentence for courts."

Although the research, Curfew Orders with Electronic Monitoring, was never designed to specifically test whether tagging should be, or was being, used as an alternative to custody,

Lady Blatch added it was a "cost-effective" alternative to imprisonment and that the research had found that some magistrates viewed it as such.

This is in contradiction to the original intention that it was to be used as an addition to the existing range of community penalties, and lends weight to reports that some magistrates have been persuading potential taggers to accept monitoring or risk being sent to jail for petty offences that would not normally merit imprisonment.

Alongside the emerging policy vacuum over how tagging ought to be used, an analysis of a recent parliamentary answer reveals that

current costs are significantly higher than ministers may wish to admit. In what appears to be an attempt to massage the figures, the Home Office suggested yesterday that the cost of a tagging order was "estimated" at being slightly less than for an average probation order and less than half the cost of a custodial sentence of the same length.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said yesterday that the average cost of probation was £50 a week while prison cost £425 a week.

A parliamentary reply on 4 December from Baroness Blatch to

Lord Harris revealed that £2.4m had been spent on the experiment so far. Even excluding the £1.3m likely to have been spent on start-up costs, each order has probably cost in the region of £4,782.

Taking an average curfew order of four months, the weekly cost would be in the region of £367 a week. In fact, the Home Office cost "estimate" might only be feasible if the courts imposed some 15,000 tag orders a year – the level officials have suggested would be needed for private security firms to operate schemes profitably. According to reports from the pilot areas, Securicor staff have been called upon to perform a

range of support tasks, from the fetching of a prescription or a four-pack of lager during curfew hours to counselling an offender threatening suicide. The company later confirmed that the average number of offenders per member of staff was two.

Mr Fletcher said: "A study of just 83 people is too few to make an evaluation but I think this invalidates the whole project. This level of support simply would not be available if the scheme was extended nationally, which indicates that the rate of breaking of orders, which is already double that of probation, would go up, not down."

Living proof that Madam Tussaud's has a new model army

Claire Garner

It is not easy to capture the wit of the singer Jarvis Cocker in wax – or any other part of him for that matter. But the sculptors are giving it their best shot.

In Madam Tussaud's day wax works were fairly crude. Not now. Technological advances and increased attention to detail are leading to ever more life-like models worth £20,000 apiece. Subjects now spend up to six hours at several sittings to enable the sculpture to measure and mould to perfection. It is six months before a star is born.

The Pulp singer is only three weeks in, but is already unmistakable. Eyes

part vacant, part soulful, enigmatic expression and slim limbs are taking shape. The effete pose was chosen by Jarvis himself, as were his clothes (black flares and Seventies jacket).

Stuart Williamson, 48, who together with the make-up team, has sculptured the waxworks for 17 years, said: "We put a lot more effort than we used to into making the models lifelike. We take hundreds of measurements. We even get a sample of hair if they'll let us. We are meticulous about detail and the results are much better than they were 10 years ago." The uncannily lifelike model of the footballer Eric Cantona, unveiled earlier this year, is proof of this.

Julie Deane, 32, a hair and makeup artist, has seen many advances in colouring techniques since she joined Madam Tussaud's in central London 12 years ago. The transition from water colour to oil paint has been significant. "Water and wax don't mix well," she said. "It used to be impossible to get fine detail. There was one basic colour for the whole head. With oil, you can put in every little freckle, dot and vein. You can gradually build up the texture to create a three-dimensional look."

But the success of the make-up depends on the model. "If someone looks like the real person it is much easier to colour," she said. "I'm doing Meryl Streep at the moment. She paid a lot of attention to detail, so I'm not having to compensate for slight discrepancies."

Not every waxwork ages at the same rate. The Beatles still parade their Sixties style, but the Princess of Wales, like many of the royals, is constantly updated. Diana's latest look-

is a waxwork of the Queen Mother.

Footballer Eric Cantona, who joined the waxworks this year

Michael Streeter

A pyramid-style money-making scheme twice outlawed by the High Court is expected to be launched for the third time early in the new year.

Peter Reece, UK director of the organisation Titan, said he was "hopeful" that a pilot project – Titan Three – could be operating in Scotland shortly. "It will be to prove that the scheme really does work," he said.

He also confirmed that the economics professor, Patrick Minford, one of the so-called Six Wise Men who advise the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had completed a computer analysis of the Titan schemes and had concluded they were a legitimate business gamble. A copy of the report is believed to have gone to the Prime Minister's office.

The first Titan venture was hampered by the High Court last year, and lost an appeal to the Court of Appeal, after the Department of Trade and Industry successfully applied to have the scheme wound down. One judge described such ventures as "pernicious".

The DTI argued that such a business, which has no product and relies on investors involving family and friends to recoup their payments, are doomed to fail.

They also claim that between them thousands of investors lost millions of pounds in the money venture – though Titan say the losses only occurred because of the DTI's legal action.

The news that Titan, which involves investors paying in up to £3,000, and then receiving a commission for each new investor they introduce directly or indirectly, is to start trading again will dismay those who had their fingers burnt before the court action.

Mr Reece said: "We would prefer to sit down and talk about the need for regulation, but if need be we will fight and we will win. This is a pioneer business. The DTI are going to lose this one."

However, at the end of January the new Trading Schemes Act becomes law, which will further restrict the way many network marketing systems can operate. It will also ban those schemes based solely on money-circulation which currently fall outside the scope of the Fair Trading Act.

Critics say the new act, introduced by the former minister Sir Nicholas Scott, is opaque and will effectively criminalise 300,000 people currently involved in legitimate network marketing.

Titan's lawyers say they will be seeking to make the Act non-applicable because it contravenes European Union law.

He said: "Getting a venture like this started is like flying an aeroplane. You take off on full-throttle, but then you settle down to cruise. We can prove that the market will not saturate."

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The organisers have now added an investment element, where some of the cash is invested in high-risk shares in the United States.

Mr Reece, whose organisation has already spent £1.7m in legal fees, said that supporters included the backbench Conservative MP Sir Michael Grylls. Titan intended to take its case to the House of Lords and to the European Court of Justice if necessary.

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Image makers: Above, Jarvis Cocker takes shape in the hands of Madame Tussaud's artists. Right, the old-style Princess of Wales and her new model.

Photographs: Andrew Buurma/Rex

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Footballer Eric Cantona, who joined the waxworks this year

like has been hailed as a triumph, a marked improvement on previous models. She originally gave one sitting before she was married and sculptors have since relied on photographs and measurements taken then. This year, however, she gave a fresh sitting.

The use of photography has also improved. "We stand the subject on a turntable and swing them round gently, taking photographs from every angle," Mr Williamson said. "We take pictures of their eyes and enlarge them 20 times to get every single detail."

There are around 400 models on show at Madam Tussaud's and the

line-up is constantly reviewed. The Duchess of York bit the dust when her decree nisi came through earlier this year. At least she is intact – unlike the MP and former Greater London Council leader Ken Livingstone and actor Charles Dance, whose heads will go into cold storage while their bodies are recycled.

A temporary exit from the exhibition may also be caused by excessive public adulation. "Joanna Lumley [the actress] has to be taken out on a regular basis, because she is so popular," said Diane Robertson, a spokeswoman for Madam Tussaud's. "Her hands get scratched

from people holding them to take pictures ... And then there's Naomi Campbell, men are all over her, getting their girlfriends to take pictures of them with her." The supermodel's image is now protected by a red rope to keep the crowds at bay.

Although skills and techniques have advanced, some models remain unchanged. Madam Tussaud herself worked without the aid of photography, oil paint or technological wizardry, and her final work, a self-portrait from 1842 when she was 81, is still on show. She stands centre stage in the exhibition which draws millions of visitors each year.

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Footballer Eric Cantona, who joined the waxworks this year

like has been hailed as a triumph, a marked improvement on previous models. She originally gave one sitting before she was married and sculptors have since relied on photographs and measurements taken then. This year, however, she gave a fresh sitting.

The use of photography has also improved. "We stand the subject on a turntable and swing them round gently, taking photographs from every angle," Mr Williamson said. "We take pictures of their eyes and enlarge them 20 times to get every single detail."

There are around 400 models on show at Madam Tussaud's and the

line-up is constantly reviewed. The Duchess of York bit the dust when her decree nisi came through

news

Reared under a Tory rule, the Big Mac generation takes a taste of polling power

Michael Streeter
gauges the mood
of Britain's
first-time voters

They are the Big Mac Generation – young people who grew up knowing life only under the Conservatives. When they were born in the late-Seventies, the ubiquitous Big Mac had just started to appear on British high streets. Today, perhaps instead of getting an engineering apprenticeship, school-leavers are as likely as not to find work serving burgers.

Last October, *The Independent* visited a group of voters in Redditch, the west Midlands home of so-called Monday man, to monitor how the voters' views changed with the political currents.

Last week we returned to Redditch, this time to speak to a cross-section of young people able – but not necessarily willing – to vote for the first time in next year's general election. We shall visit them again as the election looms closer to see if their views change.

Rachel Pott is typical of many young voters. Her opinion of political parties and of Westminster practices can be neatly summed up in one brief expression: a plague on all their houses.

"I think politicians should stop arguing and try to agree more and offer something together," she said. "It's the bickering that puts me off, I mean, what is the point of it?"

As an 18-year-old taking business studies at North East Worcestershire College (New College) her main concern is understandable education and how to make ends meet next year. "[At 18] you get all the help you need but when you're 19 you don't get much assistance from the Government and next year's going to be much harder," she said.

But this is where the link between issues and policies is broken for many of the first-timers; many do not know who stands for what or what the different policies might be.

Sam McMahon, 20, a university student in Redditch for the Christmas holidays, is blunt about his cynicism. "I think whichever party gets in, nothing will change that much for the better," he added. "I'm not even sure if I'll vote."

The move towards abstention, in



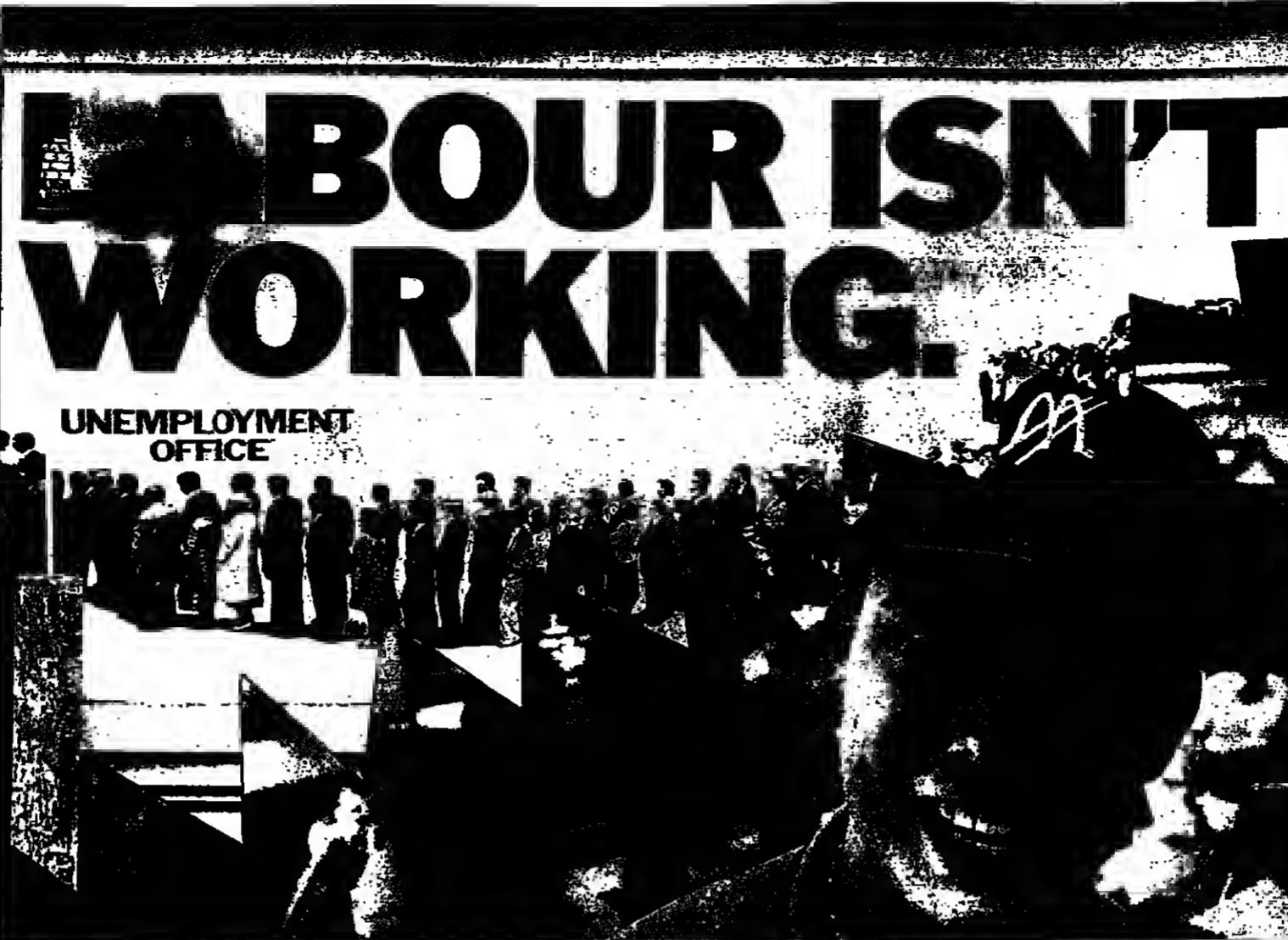
Rachel Pott: 'Politicians should stop arguing'



Richard Walker: 'I think it's time for a change'



Sarah Cox: 'Doubtful if New Labour will deliver'



Facing the future: The slogan which helped the Tories win power in 1979; and McDonald's manager, Ian Wright, surrounded by faces of a generation which knows no other government. Photographs: Gavin Fogg

some cases as a deliberate protest vote, in others as a sign of indifference, seems a powerful one.

Andrew Davies, 19, an A-level student at Arrow Vale High School, typifies the view. "I think I will make a deliberate choice not to vote – I do not think the parties offer me anything." The Conservatives are regarded as "pretty disgusting", a party that likes to make moral postures but "does not have a leg to stand on".

Nor is there much warmth for Tony Blair's New Labour. "Blair is too much like a Conservative, it's all just propaganda." But if Andrew did vote it would be for Labour.

This reluctant support for Tony

Blair is quite widespread and may represent a real worry for his party.

Ian Wright, 19, a floor manager at McDonald's in the town, has little time for Mr Blair. "He's too smarmy isn't he?" This was not last reference to the S-word among our group.

Tim Halmshaw, 18, also from Arrow Vale, said: "Tony Blair seems to be full of ideas, but ... he seems to be saying anything he can to get in." Mr Blair was, said Tim, akin to a "salesman".

His fellow pupil Sarah Cox, 18 on Boxing Day, is also doubtful. "New Labour seem to have a lot of ideas, but whether they will follow them through is another thing."

John Major generally fared better than Tony Blair, and better than the Tory Party in general. Robert Bishop, 19, a student reading combined studies, thought him "likable". Alice Melvin, 21, who works at the town's ABC cinema, thought him "quite nice, a decent bloke".

However, a significant minority concurred with Iain Farquhar's view of the Prime Minister. Iain, 18 in February, said: "I'm not that keen on Major; he doesn't seem to have much of a personality at all."

Apart from education, few issues dominate the imagination of the first-time voters. Europe, the issue that excites so much national debate,

was barely raised as an influence on how people would vote. However, for those who did mention Europe and the single currency there was an underlying euro-scepticism – with a small 'e'.

Adam Browne, 18, another pupil at Arrow Vale, has not made up his mind whether, or for whom, to vote, but he is sure of his mind on Europe. "I do not want a single currency," he said. "I think it would be bad for the country."

However, there is a general acceptance of, and in some cases support for, closer European ties. Michelle Oldfield, 18, from Arrow Vale, said: "I think we are going to integrate more with Europe, so we are not left behind."

Some of *The Independent's* group, though in the minority, had decided which way they would vote.

Richard Walker, 19, a bartender, said he would almost certainly be voting Labour. "I think it's time for a change," he said. Tony Blair's leadership was a factor in his views.

But, of those who had made up their minds, most veered towards the status quo.

Luke Davis, 18, a student at NEW College, said: "With Labour we would be going into the realms of the unknown." Tim Halmshaw said the Conservatives would also get his vote.

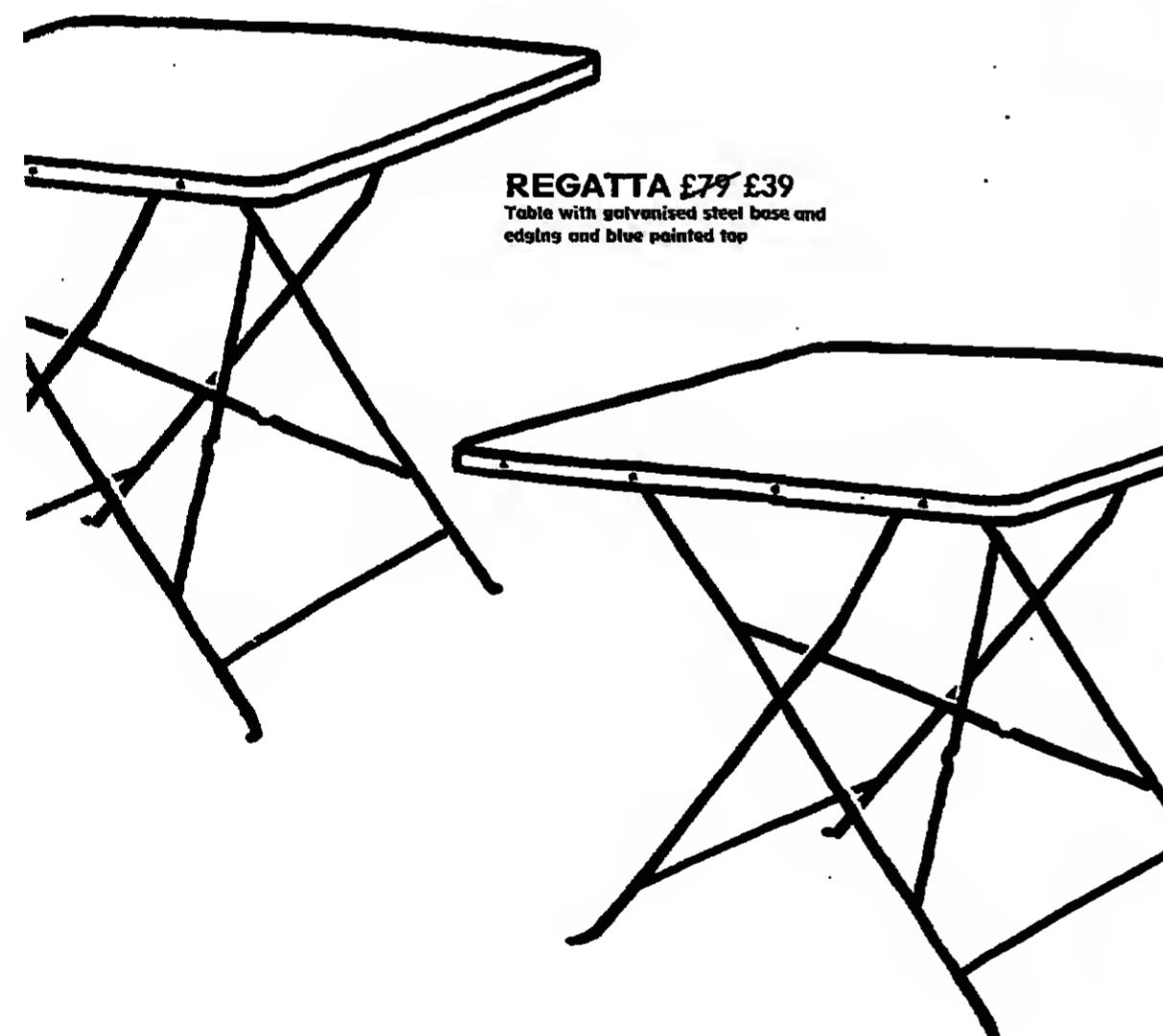
"They have not done anything particularly wrong."

Fellow pupil Michelle felt the economy was an important factor in the Tories winning her support.

"Unemployment is falling and things seem to be going all right."

One crumb of comfort for Labour may be that only one out of our sample had any passed-down notion of what the last Labour Government had been like; even if that one was far from flattering.

"The idea of a Labour Government doesn't frighten me," said Ian Wright. "But from what I know, they were not very good at handling the economy, were they?"



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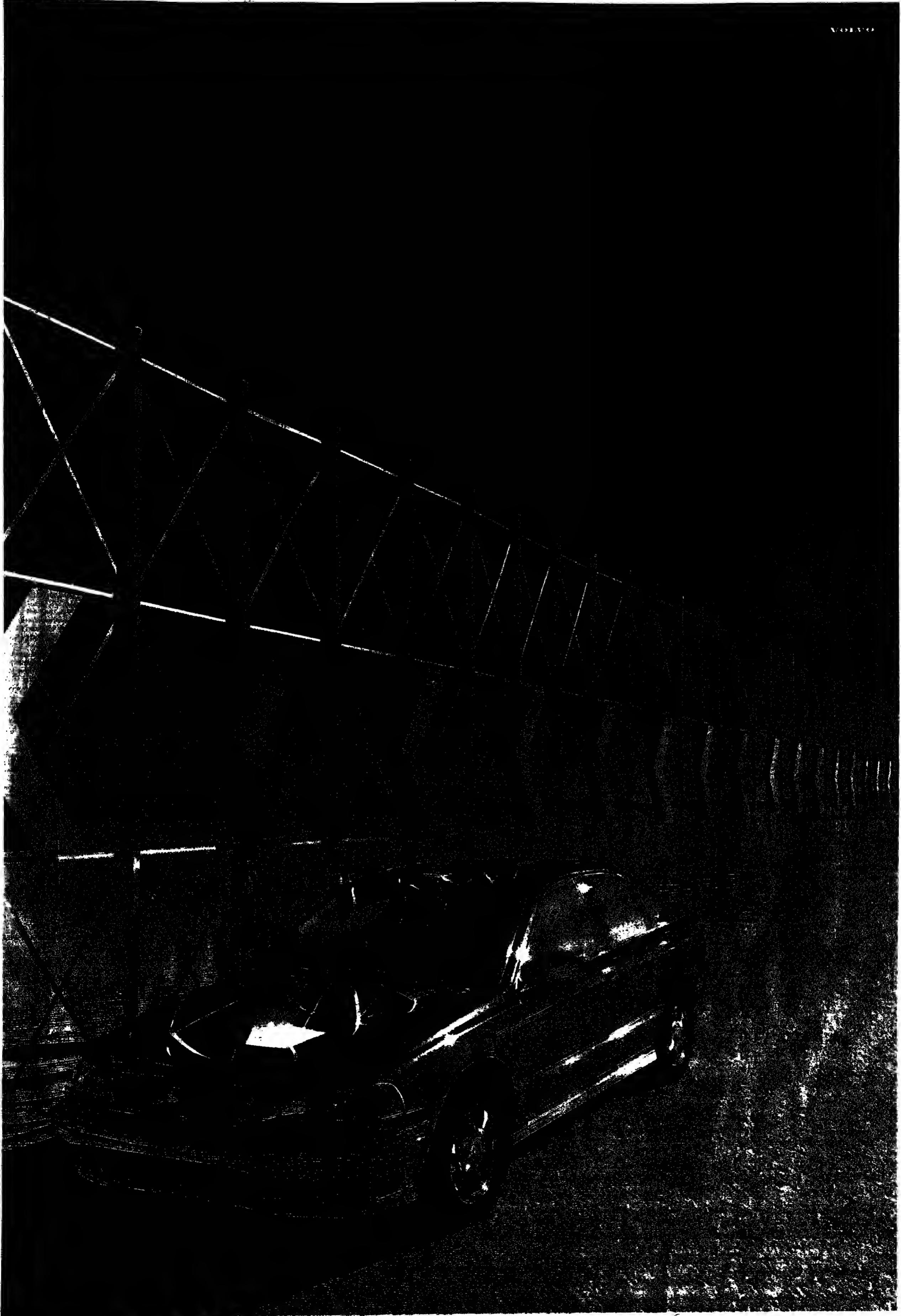
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international

China's new gamblers discover it's easier to speculate than accumulate

Teresa Poole
Peking

It had been a good day for Lian Hongying, despite the collapsing stock market. At the Huaxia share-trading company in central Peking she had made 600 yuan (£50) profit by selling some shares in a quoted Chinese department-store company. That was about as much as a week's salary in her old job in a foreign bank, which she gave up last year to have more time to play the financial markets. "I just love it," she said.

"My husband and his friend went into the market in 1994, and they persuaded me to join in. Now my whole family lives on it. I do quite well – all my husband's friends praise me."

Ms Lian, 36, spends most days at the broking house, and other punters packed into the smoke-filled room had pointed her out as a successful investor.

This has been a nerve-testing month for China's 21-million stockmarket investors: a jet-propelled bull run followed by a warning in the Communist mouthpiece, *The People's Daily*, that shares had reached "abnormal and irrational" levels. That sent prices into free-fall,

burning the pockets of millions of new investors. *The People's Daily* seemed almost gleeful at the dramas. "Stockmarkets are extremely risky, but in the past few months not a few people forgot this point," said a front-page commentary after the government's warnings.

As a result of the commentary, the paper boasted, "many people have observed the market changes and seen many things revealed and gained an even deeper understanding of the market". The editorial did not take credit for the sharp drop in prices, however. The decline was due to a lack of buying interest, it said.

At Huaxia, government attempts to cool the speculation had not dimmed the enthusiasm this week, although prices collapsed by almost a third after the *People's Daily* article. Chen Guang, 28, a businessman, said:

"Night and day I think about trading shares, much more than I think about my girlfriend. When I make a correct decision, the happiness I feel is unspeakable". In July he made a £3,000 profit selling shares in the Shanghai-quoted Cheng Huang Miao commercial centre.

Mr Xu, 54, a retired truck driver, was playing for smaller stakes. "My pension is not high, so this is the only way to make extra money. So far old men put our money together and come here in turn. One of our group is very clever; he used to be a cadre in the trade ministry."

Mrs Cai said her 24-year-old son had given up his previous job. "At first he lost money, but now he can support himself

from share-trading, and even buys things for me."

China started its stockmarket experiment in 1990, opening bourses in Shanghai and Shenzhen. This year investors have jumped from 1.2 million to 21 million, mostly concentrated in big cities. The *Shanghai Securities News* is printed at 25 sites and often sells its 300,000 copies by breakfast.

With the growing number of

people this year chasing a limited number of shares, prices soared. By the time the government decided to cool the speculation, the Shenzhen market had more than quadrupled since the beginning of 1996, and Shenzhen more than doubled.

Most of this year's nine million new investors had, until a few weeks ago, only experienced a rising market. Li Qian, spokeswoman for the Shanghai

Stock Exchange, said: "Those newcomers are not so clear about the risk. At the beginning they only see profit-making by their neighbours, so they just rush into the market and put their savings in quite high-risk stocks."

On a "B" share account in Shenzhen, the rules have now been tightened again.

China says it remains committed to the expansion of the stockmarkets. But market regulators have set a deadline of 1 January for China's brokers to start doing more to teach their clients that markets have bears as well as bulls – just in case the past weeks have not pressed that message home.



Rush to invest: But what goes up sometimes comes down with a bang, as millions of novice stockmarket speculators discovered to their cost this month

Photograph: Reuters

A Rolls by any other name brings sweet success

Roaring into the centre of town the other day on my Honda Superhawk motorcycle, I realised that I was travelling behind a Rolls-Royce bearing a silver label stating that the car was called "Full Success".

There is nothing surprising about travelling behind a Rolls-Royce; Hong Kong has more of these cars, on a per capita basis, than anywhere. However the name, appearing where I expected to see "Silver Spirit", was unusual. The British car company seemed to be making a special accommodation for the Hong Kong market – where it is practically impossible to sell anything without suggesting that it will bring success and prestige to the prospective customer.

Checking with Spencer Lam, the general sales manager for Rolls-Royce, I discovered that the owner had indeed chosen the name. "You're so lucky to see that car", Mr Lam told me, "it's very special". Apparently Rolls-Royce customers are given whatever they ask for on their cars.

As Christmas time is the season of commerce in Hong Kong, barely sullied by religion, I freely offer this piece of intelligence to the Rolls-Royce marketing department. They should note that the lucky owner is definitely onto something which could help this bent even more Rolls-Royces.

I know because a friend of mine spent some time as an advertising copywriter and

HONG KONG DAYS

found himself putting together an advert for a luxurious German car. The manufacturers were very proud of its technological innovations and its many engineering triumphs and insisted that these featured prominently in the advertisement.

"You can't sell a car on this basis in Hong Kong", objected my friend. "Why? This is very successful in Germany", said his client. As the client is always right, an advertisement was duly produced highlighting the technological wonders of the new

model, saying nothing about the immense prestige it would bestow on its owner. Sales immediately plummeted.

Hong Kong customers want to be told that if you spend a lot of money you will gain a lot of face, and they like to be reassured that the purchase will somehow put them at an advantage. One expensive brand of cognac is exclusively marketed in Hong Kong on story lines which show that the wily cognac drinker is always able to put one over on his hapless foreign business partner.

Most consumer products are sold on the basis of prestige. A brand of shirts promises executive success; a Japanese car offers the prospect of driving its purchaser to untold riches on the stock market; an apartment in a new block lets purchases "tower" over their business rivals, and so on.

Hong Kong is often described as a money-mad, success-driven society. Like many generalisations, this one contains an element of fact. No wonder that makers of luxury goods make a beeline for the colony. At Christmas time sales of designer watches, up-market handbags and other quality products are remarkable.

The point about these goods is that they

are bought because they are expensive. How else can an average wannabe tycoon show that he has already made it? Only the seriously rich can afford to relax; they have nothing to prove. Some are even seen wearing Japanese watches. Those wanting to join their ranks have to be given face by showing they are in the big league in terms of spending power.

As for me, I'm thinking of applying to Honda to see if they would agree to the renaming of my motorcycle as "Moderate Success", instead of "Superhawk". We all have to start somewhere!

Stephen Vines

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Stephensons

Peaceful end near for hostage crisis

Peruvian guerrillas agree to leave residence amid reports of US raid. Phil Davison reports

The Peruvian government and Tupac Amaru guerrillas holding 83 VIP hostages in the besieged Japanese ambassador's residence appeared to be moving towards a no-violent end to the two-week-old crisis yesterday.

After releasing a further 20 hostages on Saturday night, including no foreign ambassadors and 10 Japanese businessmen, the guerrillas said that they were willing to leave the residence peacefully "through dialogue".

They made no mention of their erstwhile key demand for the release of hundreds of jailed comrades, something President Alberto Fujimori has said is out of the question.

In a telephone call from Europe to Reuters News Agency in Lima, Tupac Amaru spokesman Isaac Velasco spoke yesterday: "an intermediate solution" which did not have to include the release of all Tupac Amaru prisoners.

Guerrilla leader Nestor Cerpa's wife is said to be among the prisoners, serving a life term on terrorism charges.

On the government side, chief negotiator Domingo Palermo, Peru's Education Minister, who met Cerpa in the besieged residence for the first time on Saturday, said there had been "advances towards a solution of this crisis".

He was commenting specifically on the release of the 20 hostages, which left the rebels with 83 captives from the original 500-plus they took when they stormed a diplomatic cocktail party on 17 December.

The 20 or so guerrillas appear to be pruning their captives to a manageable number, per-

haps one or two busloads, with a view to leaving the building for Lima airport and on to a jungle hideout or perhaps exile in a country such as Cuba.

The guerrillas still hold those they consider their most valuable hostages - Peru's Foreign Minister, Francisco Tadea, senior police and military officers, Supreme Court judges, congressmen and Mr Fujimori's brother, Pedro.

The apparent softening of positions on both sides came amid reports that US SWAT team experts were advising their Peruvian counterparts on how a hostage-freeing raid might work.

Americans were also reported to be analysing conversations within the ambassador's residence, picked up by sensitive bugging devices outside.

President Fujimori has taken a tough line publicly but he is said by diplomats to be making concessions in the talks involving Mr Palermo.

The key mediator appears to be Peruvian Bishop Juan Luis Cipriani, from the city of Ayacucho, who has been visiting the besieged building every day since Christmas and appears to have defused the threat of a violent denouement.

In a communiqué read by a released hostage on Saturday night, the guerrillas criticised politicians and the media for blaming their group as "a terrorist and genocidal band, which is absolutely false".

"Looking at the situation in the jails and the drama that the families of our imprisoned comrades have lived through, we think it will be understood that we petition should be heeded,"



Photograph: Reuters

Liberated: Ahmed Mokhtar (right), the Malaysian ambassador to Peru, with his wife after his release by guerrillas on Saturday

significant shorts

Pyongyang apologises for spy's sub

in its first official apology ever to its southern rival, North Korea expressed "deep regret" over sending a spy submarine into South Korea in September, which triggered a deadly manhunt. In a two-sentence apology the Communist state also promised to prevent similar incidents from recurring. The apology was seen as a major concession by North Korea, which regards the Seoul government as a US puppet. AP - Seoul

continue the protests until the end of January. AP - Seoul

Euro weaker than mark' claim denounced

The German Finance Minister Theo Waigel and Chancellor Minister Friedrich Bohr denounced an opposition leader who predicted the euro would be weaker than the German mark. Gerhard Schroeder, premier of Lower Saxony and a chancellor candidate for the opposition Social Democrats, said that "naturally the euro will be weaker than the mark". Reuter - Bonn

Chechnya pull-out

The last Russian combat unit withdrew from Chechnya under a peace deal between Moscow and separatist leaders, Itar-Tass news agency said. It quoted Russia's security chief Ivan Rybkin as saying that only logistics and transport units would remain in Chechnya pending a final pullout next month. Reuter - Moscow

lay down its arms under an amnesty deal and then integrate itself into Peruvian politics as a populist party in support of the poor.

Many Peruvian intellectuals say that the Christmas hostage crisis was an accident waiting to happen. As in Mexico and other Latin American countries, emphasis on free market economic policies has brought investment but has widened the gap between rich and poor.

This explained the rise of the Zapatista guerrillas and the People's Revolutionary Army (EPR) in Mexico in the last three years, the intellectuals claim.

Government attempts to mobilise Peruvians in anti-Tupac Amaru marches brought only a few thousand out on to the streets, while the majority of Peru's poor express sympathy with the guerrillas' goals, if not their methods.

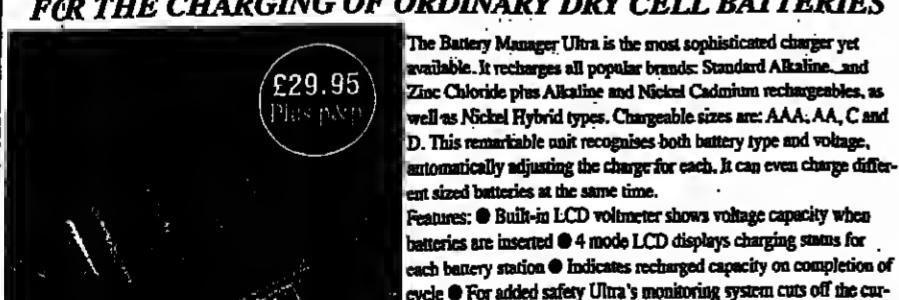
Islamists held in Egypt

Egyptian police arrested 200 members of a new Islamic militant group that authorities allege is funded by the banned and influential Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Ahram newspaper said police made a "swift crackdown" on the "Kotboun", named after Sayed Kotb, a Brotherhood leader executed in 1966 for attempting to overthrow then-President Gamal Abdel Nasser. AP - Cairo

Tung chooses top official

Hong Kong's leader-designate, Tung Chee-hwa, moved closer to forming his post-colonial administration at the weekend with the appointment of the territory's popular top civil servant, Anson Chan. Mr Tung said that he would meet all principal officials of the incoming government starting from today. Reuter - Hong Kong

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Cabbage Patch doll 'eats' girls' hair

Greenville, South Carolina (AP) - In the third such incident since Christmas, a little girl got caught in the mouth a battery-powered doll that mimics eating. Three-year-old Carly Mize was left partly bald on Thursday when her hair was snagged by her doll and pulled out of her scalp.

The girl's mother, Tammy Mize of Easley, South Carolina, said: "When I picked Ca by up, the doll was attached to the back of her head."

The Cabbage Patch Snack Time Kid doll, which is supposed to "eat" plastic chips or other fake food, has no on-off switch and Mrs Mize said she tried to prise the doll off Ca's head with no success.

"It kept rolling her hair inside the head," she said. "It pulled her hair from the root. She completely bald all the way down the back of her head."

In another incident, a doll belonging to 7-year-old Sara Stevens of Griffith, Indiana, had to be taken apart when chewed its way up her hair to her scalp. Sara's aunt, Kell Nagy, took 30 minutes to fix the little girl's hair.

Snack time: The hair-eating Cabbage Patch doll

Tibetan activists set off Lhasa bomb

area Poole

large bomb has exploded in central Lhasa, the most serious sabotage attempt this year in Tibet by anti-Chinese activists.

The blast occurred early on Christmas Day, but details only emerged at the weekend.

The device was placed at the front of the Lhasa metropolitan district government offices, in the middle of the city. Windows were shattered up to 100 yards away, and

two hotels opposite the blast were damaged. According to the London-based Tibet Information Network (TIN), five people were injured, including two nightwatchmen at the government offices and shopkeepers living nearby.

The size of the explosion, at 1.30am, has made it impossible for the Chinese authorities to ignore or to deny.

A broadcast on the official Tibet Radio station described the blast as "yet another counter-revolutionary bombing staged by the Dalai clique

in Lhasa city" and called it "an appalling act of terrorism".

The Tibetan exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, has always argued against the use of violence in Tibet's struggle against the Chinese, but this is the third bomb to go off in Lhasa this year, and by far the biggest. A government official told Reuters: "It was a huge explosion that could be heard a long way off."

As 1996 draws to a close, Chinese repression and control in Tibet is at its most severe for years, with monks being expelled from monasteries or

arrested as part of a political "re-education" campaign. The harshness of the Chinese authorities' approach to Tibet was again illustrated at the weekend when news emerged of a long prison sentence imposed on a 30-year-old exiled Tibetan musician, a former Fulbright scholar in the US, who was arrested while making an unauthorised film about folk music and dance in Tibet.

Ngawang Choephel, who left Tibet when he was a child, was arrested in September 1995 about two months after arriving in Tibet. He has

been sentenced to 18 years for allegedly spying. China also repeatedly accused "a certain foreign country" - clearly meaning the United States - of funding him and providing equipment in return for information.

This is the longest sentence passed for a political offence other than murder since 1969, when two monks were jailed for 19 years.

An official radio broadcast said that Ngawang Choephel entered Tibet "to carry out his activities under the pretext of collecting information on folk songs and dances in

Tibet ... in an attempt to provide the information gathered to the Dalai clique's government-in-exile and to an organisation of a certain foreign country".

It said that he had confessed to the crimes, but gave no details. In contrast, Westerners who travelled with the musicologist in Tibet said he was genuinely involved in filming dance and music, and anxious to avoid anything political, said TIN.

The length of the sentence may be

meant as a warning to other Tibetan exiles who visit Tibet.

If a Tibetan exile enters Tibet under Chinese immigration procedures he does so as a Chinese citizen and thus loses any protection from his country of residence.

Ngawang Choephel had Indian travel documents but did not have a foreign passport.

In Washington the State Department spokesman, John Hammer, said the US was "quite concerned" about the sentence. Ngawang Choephel studied ethnomusicology at Middlebury College, Vermont during the period 1992-3.

Capturing nature's pulse in the Pacific heart of a mangrove forest



Global vision: This natural shape is the result of a forest drying out near Voh village, New Caledonia, in the Pacific. The photo is part of a project, under Unesco patronage, to be completed by the year 2000 and sponsored by Fujifilm. It will be an 'inventory' of the planet in the form of aerial shots, intended to lead to a better understanding of its ecological evolution

Photograph: Yann Arthus-Bertrand/Fujifilm

Police block Belgrade protests

Mark Heinrich
Reuters

Belgrade — Serbian security police blocked a march by 10,000 people in Belgrade yesterday in the 42nd day running of pro-democracy demonstrations. The protest column was interrupted after it poured into the Srbija capital's main pedestrian mall following fiery speeches by leaders of the Zajedno (Together) opposition coalition in Republic Square.

Riot police were enforcing a ban on street marches imposed by the ruling Socialist party (SPS) after a mêlée on Christmas Eve between Zajedno protesters and government troops hosed into Belgrade to intimidate the opposition. A Zajedno supporter was reportedly trampled to death as crowds tried to flee a police charge.

Police created two cordons in demonstrators yesterday. Protesters reacted, as before, by walking in circles as if they were imprisoned. They also shouted "murderers" and "dogs" at police. A carnival atmosphere set in, with some demonstrators joining hands in Serbian dances. No violence was reported.

Up to a quarter of a million people have demonstrated in Belgrade and other Serbian towns daily in a campaign to reverse the SPS's annulment of municipal elections won by the Zajedno bloc on 17 November.

Zajedno, backed later by findings of a special Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe mission, accused the SPS of vote rigging and wants its victory re-submitted to 14 cities including Belgrade. Other municipalities were swept by the SPS.

Chateau sale sows grapes of wrath

Mary Dejevsky

With the season of good cheer in France well underway, some very unusual write-ups are flying around concerning the future of Chateau d'Yquem, a Sauternes lauded by connoisseurs as one of the consistently finest dessert wines made.

This quintessentially French quirk was prompted by the announcement last month that the chateau and its vineyards were to be sold to the international luxury goods concern Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH). When the first writ was issued on Christmas Eve — from one brother to another — the affair started to assume the dimensions of a family feud that could last for generations.

The two sides then started to air their passionate arguments for public delectation, and it became clear that the new year could offer a graphic case study in what happens when exclusive and traditional French companies meet modern international commerce. Despite stiff rear-guard resistance from many of the French families concerned, this is a clash that will only become more frequent.

It was on 28 November that the public first heard the news: Chateau d'Yquem, owned by the aristocratic Lur-Saluces family since 1785 and partly owned by them for the previous 200 years, had been sold to the giant LVMH group. The reputed price paid by LVMH for the controlling stake was 500m French francs (£59m).

Reaction to the sale was mixed: from a resigned "that's the only way to survive in this day and age" to profound regret and even anger that so vital a part of France had been betrayed to foreigners.

Almost immediately, how-

Former murder capital of US rocked by the lowest killing count in 20 years

David Usborne on the Big Apple's sudden rash of lawfulness

New York — Branded for years as the crime capital of the world, New York City was armed this weekend with figures to show that things have changed. It recorded fewer murders in 1996 than in any year since 1968; the decline in the number of random murders by strangers, meanwhile, was especially dramatic.

As of Saturday, the tally of murders in the city stood at 972 for the year, less than half the record total of 2,245 murders committed in 1990; 1996 is set to be the least murderous year in New York City for almost two decades.

The end-of-year figures, released by

the New York City Police Commissioner, Howard Safir, are especially striking, however, in highlighting the drop in random acts of murder.

In 1996, 19 per cent of murder victims in the city were killed by strangers, compared to 37 per cent in 1993. Four-fifths of the murders, therefore, were committed by people who were acquainted with their victims.

"The city is now safer in that, one,

you are less likely to be murdered, and two, you are less likely to be attacked

by a stranger," Mr Safir said. "It's the kind of thing that people always talk about, that if you go to New York somebody's going to come out of an alley and shoot you."

There was evidence also of a drop in the number of guns on New York's streets. Arrests for illegal possession of firearms were down by 20 per cent last year. Moreover, there were 21 per cent fewer shootings in the city and 20 fewer victims of shootings, the police figures said.

The statistics are good news for the city's tourist industry. They are also a boost to the Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, who, in spite of being a Republican in a heavily Democratic city, is reckoned to have an easy path to re-election next year largely because of the sudden drop in the city's crime rates.

The figures will also give more fuel to the debate about where credit is due for the reversal of New York's crime problem. Although crime has been

dropping all over the United States, especially in large cities, the decline in New York has been especially marked and exceeds the national average.

Contributing factors are likely to include the waning of the crack-cocaine epidemic, an improving city economy and national efforts to make guns less easily available.

Mr Safir, however, attributed the latest statistics to new policing strategies in New York, in particular a crackdown on quality-of-life crime like subway fare-dodging and urinating in public, that have also disengaged criminals from carrying guns.

Tension high as Hebron deal looms

Eric Silver

Hebron

The black of the slogans, spray-painted in crude Arabic by Jewish settlers on the Cordoba

Arab girls' school, is still legible through the Palestinian whitewash. "Arabs out!" reads one. "Death to the Arabs!" another. "Baruch Goldstein — may he hit out your name!" a third.

Goldstein, an American-born settler, was beaten to death by angry worshippers nearly three years ago after massacring 29 Muslims at prayer in what the Arabs revere as the Ibrahim Mosque and the Jews as the tomb of their Patriarchs.

On the brink of an Israeli redeployment in Hebron, the last West Bank city under occupation, he remains a symbol for both communities — a heroic martyr to many of the 450 settlers, the ultimate oppressor to the 150,000 Palestinians.

Under an agreement expected to be sealed this week, Israel will hand over 85 per cent of Hebron to Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority. The Cor-

deba school, which draws its 205 pupils from all over the city, will remain within the Jewish enclave, under Israeli military rule, as will 15,000 Palestinian residents.

A red, white and black Palestinian flag flies defiantly from the window of the headmistress's office on a rocky hillside overlooking Beit Hadassah, the settler stronghold five minutes' walk from the disputed burial site of Abraham, the common ancestor of Arab and Jew. The headmistress, Firyal Abu Haykal, is emphatic: her school will not move.

"This school," she says, "belongs to the Palestinian Authority. It will continue to belong to the Palestinian Authority. The settlers curse our children, they beat them, they throw stones at them. But we have no choice but to stay."

But will the parents continue sending their daughters? "The authority has barred our pupils from transferring to other schools on the Palestinian side of town," Mrs Abu Haykal said. "They won't be accepted. I brought three of my

own children here, aged seven, 13 and 14. All the parents I've talked to say they will make the same sacrifice."

Like many of the Palestinians who are standing their ground among the settlers, Mrs Abu Haykal does not see, perhaps

does not want to see, the redeployment as the last word. "I believe the final goal of the Oslo agreement is to end the occupation. Eventually, it will come to an end. We've waited 30 years. Why not wait another five?" Below the Cordoba

school, Arab labourers are building an extra storey on a nearby yeshiva seminary. In a

nearby coffee shop, Yusuf Sharabi, a 70-year-old in a black and white chequered kaffiyeh, says he is angry with them, but can't bring himself to interfere. "They have to live," he admitted, "and we have no work for them."

In the fruit and vegetable market between the yeshiva and the mosque, Arab traders are worried that they will soon have no customers. "Business is very bad already," said Muhammad Rajabi. "People are afraid to come to the market because of the police and the settlers. It will be worse after the redeployment. We shall have to move."

Up to 2,000 sympathisers came to reinforce the Hebron settlers over the Sabbath but most of them had left yesterday. The city was frozen in uncertainty. Arab youths lobbed a couple of ineffective petrol bombs at Israeli checkpoints.

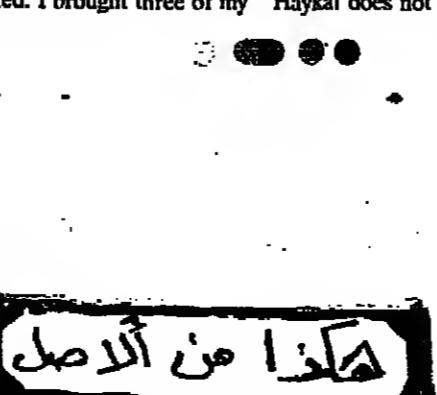
The Jews, like the Arabs, are still unconvinced that anything is going to change. "There isn't going to be a withdrawal," said Moshe Ben-Zimra, a settler leader.

Last night, the Israeli Defence Minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, met Mr Arafat in Gaza in an attempt to resolve the remaining problems before



Collage: Two Palestinians being marched off by an Israeli soldier in the centre of Hebron yesterday after firebombs were thrown at Israeli troops

Photograph: AFP



Tuning in by remote control

ANNUS HORRIBILIS, ANNUS MIRABILIS

Alan Yentob was the visible face of BBC moguldom. Then John Birt flicked the switch. By Thomas Sutcliffe

A little over a year ago, Alan Yentob, then controller of BBC1, gave an interview to this newspaper. The occasion was the imminent arrival of the Christmas schedules, scheduler's potential Waterloo, when a whole year of arcane manoeuvring and skirmishes by the television generals comes down to a single set-piece battle.

Traditionally the BBC has played the part of Wellington in these encounters, enjoying at this one time of the year an advantage which it often loses for the rest. Which may be why Yentob spoke of the occasion with particular relish. "It's one of the few occasions of the year," he said, "when you could be getting people just sitting down watching your schedule quite consistently throughout the evening."

But it is also worth noting that the possessive "your" refers not just to the BBC but to the controller himself, uniquely possessed of a power to commission and arrange the programmes. For senior television executives, scheduling is perhaps the most prized skill of all – an often intuitive mystery which marks out the true elect.

And at the end of this year, Alan Yentob, a high priest of the arcane, no longer has a schedule to call his own. Because what this year brought him was a paradoxical and unenviable gift: a promotion that many people saw as a demotion.

It took him some time to digest his change of status from controller of BBC1, able to commission programmes and spend the money, to the newly-created post of director of programmes, responsible for making sure the new controllers get the programmes they want. Though the BBC had been discussing a radical reorganisation for well over a year, Yentob had little idea that the mainly managerial task of amalgamating television and radio in-house production would eventually fall to him.

In the event he was informed only three days before the official announcement (vivid proof, incidentally, that John Birt's admiration for new management techniques remains only theoretical in some respects).

Yentob's new job may be daunting, but when John Birt says it is of crucial importance to the BBC it isn't just talking a soothing fiction. If the corporation is to survive as one of the world's great production houses rather than just a superior publisher-distributor, then much of that future depends on what Alan Yentob does next. He will have to ensure that the BBC is in a position to generate intellectual property

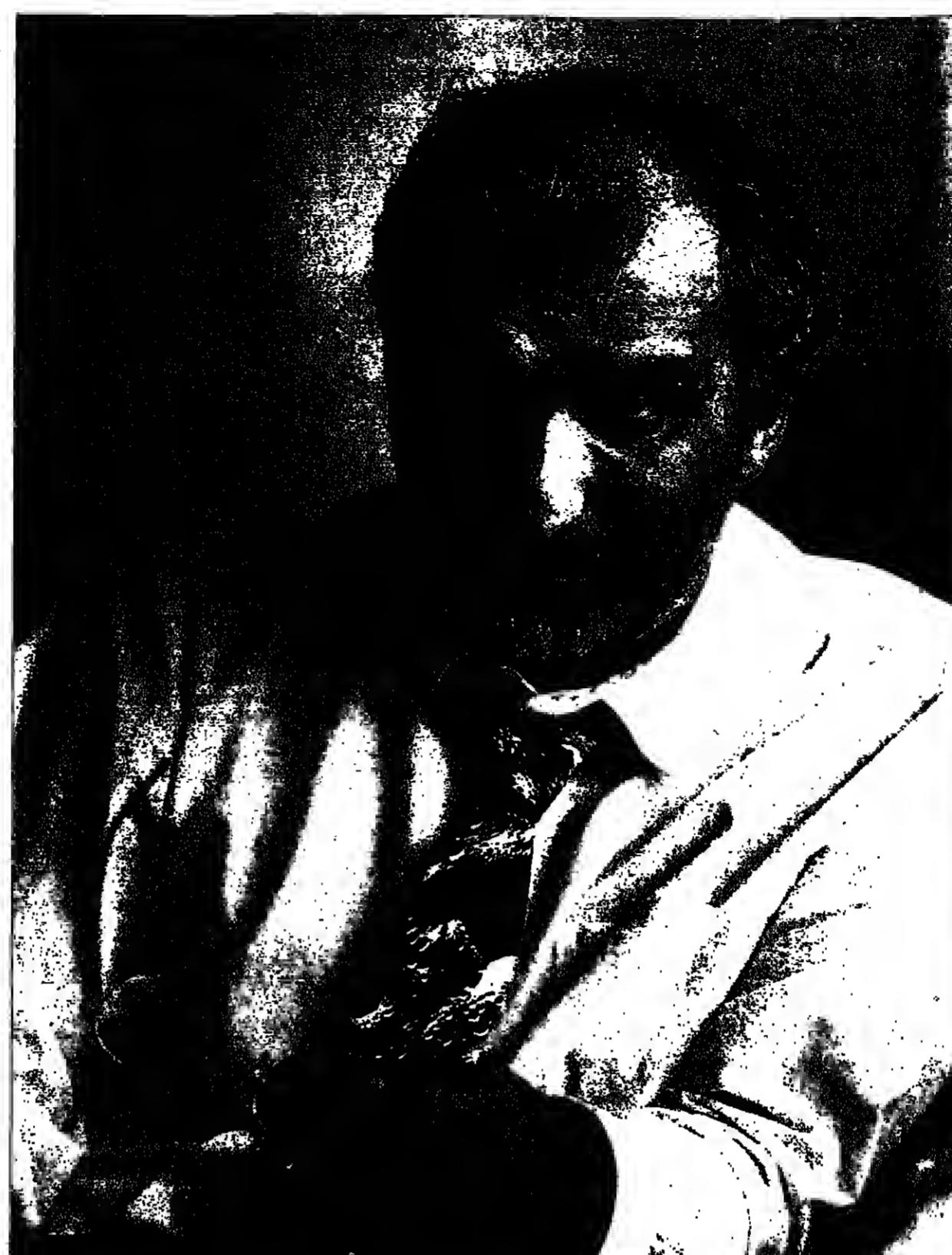
that it can exploit in an explosion of new technical outlets. In some respects it would be hard to think of a more demanding post to occupy.

His difficulty, though, was that it didn't look like that from the outside. "I want to be good, and I want to be happy," Yentob wrote during one of the BBC's recent staff training seminars (holy days of obligation for the management faithful) and it occurred to many that he could have one or the other in his new job, but he was unlikely to get both. The received opinion ran something as follows: loyal and faithful servant confounds his critics (who had said he was too intellectual for the BBC's popular channel) by narrowing the ratings gap between the BBC and ITV.

Without abandoning the traditional values of the Corporation (indeed by self-consciously restoring some of them) he had taken the battle to the enemy, ITV, in creative trouble anyway, had to absorb the shock of being beaten for overall share for the first time in years. And as a reward for these services he found himself excluded from a job he loved; and, some argued, sidelined from the succession too.

On this last matter, the BBC Kremelinologists are still divided. Some, arguing that the power to commission is the fundamental weapon in an executive's hands, suggest that the move to production makes it more difficult for Yentob to ascend to the director-generalship. Others, more realistically, note that the task, if successfully achieved, would fill the one remaining blank in an already impressive CV. Nobody doubts his ability as a programme-maker or scheduler or impresario of talent, but in the field of management he still has work to prove, and this would do it incontrovertibly. Yentob may have taken an unexpected fork in the road, but it might yet offer a more direct route to the top.

That hardly means things will be easy. As well as the Herculean task of putting BBC Production in order (a job that will require painful personnel decisions and the friction of organisational change), Yentob will have to reassess his own editorial clout (the fact that the perceptions may be wrong does not necessarily diminish the damage they might do). He has a certain amount of inertia on his side: by far the greatest proportion of the BBC's output comes from its in-house production talent (though, like other broadcasters, the BBC has a statutory obligation to take 25 per cent of its material from independent production companies). This gives Yentob a



Still on schedule? Yentob faces the Herculean task of putting BBC Production in order, reasserting his editorial clout and convincing colleagues he is still on the way up

Photograph: Nick Turnip

very powerful base from which to affect the BBC's output in all areas. He also chairs the Programme Committee, a body which makes decisions about long-term editorial strategy for the entire Corporation.

But there are other factors. The news that Jane Root (one of the founders of the very successful independent production company Wall to Wall) is shortly to be appointed as head of independent commissions, reporting directly to Michael Jackson and Mark Thompson, must give Yentob pause for thought. That figure of 25 per cent, after all, is a minimum, not a ceiling. In some areas such as entertainment, around 42 per cent of programming is already coming from independent companies. If that figure was to be replicated elsewhere, the influence of BBC Production – and of the man who runs it – would unquestionably be diminished.

More intriguing still is the question of personal relationships in this cat's cradle of responsibility and authority. Michael Jackson, the new director of television and the figure to whom some newspapers have already awarded the unofficial title of "The Most Powerful Man in Television", has been a friend of Yentob's for some time, but not for as long as Root, with whom Jackson worked on influential programmes such as Channel 4's *The Media Show*. Her arrival sends a clear message that the BBC wants to improve its relationship with the independent sector, not merely meet its legal obligations. Those interested in the ebb and flow of power will be watching carefully to see in which direction certain unmoored independent producers begin to drift – will Peter Bazalgette, for example, the inventor of some of the BBC's most successful daytime pro-

gramming, offer new programmes through BBC Productions or through Jane Root's department?

If there is a cultivated rivalry here – one intended to make BBC Production fit for external competition by bringing in a sparing partner through the front door – then Yentob will make a formidable local champion, as he has large reserves of staff respect to trade on, plus a track record of innovation. He is also genuinely dedicated to the idea of the BBC as a public-service broadcaster, a vocational passion he will need to carry him through the tricky months ahead.

Not the least of his tasks now, though, is to convince all his colleagues of what he already believes – that his sudden change of title was a ladder and not a snake.

Tomorrow: Irvine Welsh's *annus mirabilis*

PRIDE & PREJUDICE

by Tracey Austen

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single player in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a double partner.

"My dear Mr Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that there are to be new balls at Netherfield? What a fine thing for our girls!"

"Lizzie, my dear," said Mr Bennet to his favourite daughter, "it appears your mother wants you to have a set with Mr Dingley."

"Oh but father," replied Lizzie, "Jane is so much more accomplished at the net than I and her ground strokes would do us all credit, far better than mine ever could. Might she not go in my place?"

"As long as one of you will play it matters not which. But we do not want a walkover so let us take the hrougham," sighed Mr Bennet.

A C Webster, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancs

HEART OF DARKNESS

by Jerome Conran

Any wallpaper – even flocked – would have been welcome. This was clearly not the Fulham Road, although the character was interesting.

Stephen Smithson, Leeds

MIDDLEMARCH

by T S Eliot

Mr Casaubon was lost. He paused on the bridge at Westminster, and considered where he was. But for some reason he could not think clearly; could not think at all, could not ...

He walked to the railing. The Thames still flowed below, oily, like paint. Disconnected timbers were borne on its sluggish surface. But no fish swam there, thought Mr Casaubon; no blue kingfishers flashed along the level water. Too-wit, too-woo, said his lips. Too-wit, too-woo.

But he had grown too old for wooing; too stiff in the knees, too ponderous of manner. How must others perceive him, with his bald head and tight waistcoat?

He turned back to the road. Carriages swarmed through ruts, and men rushed with umbrellas. So many men, moving frantically and without purpose, shadowy in the rain.

"Regardez, l'abime," he said to himself. "Le monde, l'abime."

Durham, Dambappadda nada, niente, nichil."

G Strunnell, Coulston, Surrey

FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS (OR BATH)

by Emma Thompson

We were just outside Bath, on the edge of the Cotswolds, when the tea took hold.

"I do so apologise for the inconvenience, ma'am, but I simply must ask the carriage driver to stop."

I looked at Mr Charles Winthrop. His face had a strange, contorted expression. A face, I might add, that normally was not without certain pleasing aspects.

"But why? Do you wish to be ill?" I asked. His eyes were crossed. His legs, also, were in such a fashion.

"No, ma'am," he replied. His eyes rolled about in a not agreeable manner. He crossed and uncrossed his legs with a hardly a pause between.

"Mr Winthrop, what can be the matter?"

"Quite simply, Mrs Branagh," he said, "I must 'water the begonias'."

I felt light-headed. My voice faltered as I spoke, "Why didn't you say so? I thought you were needing the toilet!"

Stephen Smithson, Leeds

À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU

by M Proops

At Aunt Amiot's I lie awake listening for Monsieur Swann's bell, knowing that I must have Mummy's goodnight kiss as her breasts cushion me to sleep into that magic-lantern land where chauffeurs in

rubber uniforms become my nuns of speed sweeping me through salons and cathedrals to dark places where bloodstained butchers push hampers into caged rats while their naked delivery-boys play with thick sausages. Is this normal?

My dear Marcel, this is perfectly

normal for a growing Jewish boy. I'm just a mite concerned about your sight.

Insomnia. Combray can be so bracing.

Avoid too many madeleine cakes at

supper. Try instead lime tea. Meanwhile

why not a little seaside air? Next time

Dearer Miss Nomer

In last Friday's paper we published a selection of the brilliant paragraphs from readers who entered our competition prompted by an international misattribution of our own. We failed to tell you that there would be more today (even Miss Nomer nods). But here they come, as good as the last lot.

Below are prime bottles of champagne on their way to the auction room for Friday's "Ladys' Jim" by Martin Amis and a new novel by David Lodge for "The Hound of the Baskervilles Ha Ha Ha", below.

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Papa is deep into his naughty *condom sanitaire* take Mummy to *Lafayette* for a new bra (*Oedipus* range up to 44DD) and then a room for two at the Grand Hotel Cabourg. Sleep tight.

Roger Betteridge, Shardlow, Derbyshire

THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT

by Timothy Leary

The Owl and the Pussycat dropped a tab And sat back to see what they'd see The Book of the Dead had been well read

For when they were out of their tree The Owl looked down at his feet on the ground

And sang to a small sizar,

"O luminous Pussy, O Pussy you glow,

What a luminous Pussy you are,

You are,

You are!

What a luminous Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl "Oh Man, how you howl!

Your voice, it has power and grace

We should form a band, and travel the land

But what shall we do for a bass?"

So they tripped down the street, they were hoping to meet

A bassist who knew all his chords

And t'berc on a stage, a Piggy Wig played

And the notes they came straight from the Lord

The Lord,

The Lord

And the notes they came straight from the Lord.

With Bowie, Beefheart and McGuinn

Their debut LP – *The Pig, Puss and Me*

It went triple gold in a week

And "Paw/Trotter/Wing" together still sing

Lysergically fuelled, so to speak

To speak

Lysergically fuelled, so to speak.

Alan Weston, London E18

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

by Sir James Goldsmith

Ill fares the land, lo! hast'ning ill a prey.

Where Brussels rules and Europehopes decay.

Federalists may flourish or may fade

A breath can make them, as a breath has made.

But we bold Sceptics, our great nation's pride,

Have high ideals that may not be denied.

A time there was, ere griefs o'er

whelmed our land,

When I could be content with head in sand,

For me light labour spread her wholesome store,

And piled me up a mountain, maybe more.

But then I yearn'd to grasp Britannia's sword,

And high me home from indolence abroad.

No more I cried "Nunc est bibendum".

But "let my people have a referendum".

Oil-lackeys lashed with words unkind

And the long laugh that speaks the vacant mind,

But still they gazed, and still the wonder grew

That I should have such wealth but not a clue.

Geoffrey Langley, Bristol

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES HA HA HA

The wrong tunes for Redditch's young voters

John Major is "quite nice, a decent bloke", according to a young man on our panel of first-time voters in Redditch. He is not the only one who thinks so. This perception of the Prime Minister is widely shared. It also happens to be remarkably imperceptible. John Major is a tough political fighter, a calculating partisan; he has some political achievements to his record, but, like most other politicians at one time or another, he has placed his own leadership and the short-run advantage of party before the common interest.

But let that pass; Brian Mawhinney may think himself entitled to a new year's jib at this widespread sense that John Major is a good bloke, coupled as it is with an almost equally widespread view of the Labour leader as a man with a plastic smile. Cue yet more asinine attacks on the man's physical appearance.

The Tories currently have three songs to sing. Number one is that being hummed by the youth of Redditch, "honest John". The man in shirt-sleeves is guiled the punters in 1992, so why not again? (He didn't all the evidence says that the outcome of the election was decided well in advance of the contest itself and owed nothing to Mr Major's soapbox.) Readers and viewers should stand ready for a deluge of man-in-saloon-bar/sub-Stanley Baldwin images and rhetoric.

The other Tory song in a Major key

is good economic news. The Prime Minister's new year's message today is like Philip Glass's music, you can drop into it at any point, even start backwards, and it sounds pretty much like the same chord: things are looking up. According to the Nationwide, house prices will have risen by 15 per cent in the two years ending next winter. This, the Deputy Prime Minister assures us, is the kind of inflation that is good for us. But it is also apparent that there is no reliable relationship between changes in the economic indicators and voting intentions. We have had enough economic recovery by now to see that better prospects for jobs and incomes are not an inducement to commit to voting Tory. Memories of Tory economic incompetence are still strong, and besides, the experience of relative prosperity seems to have lessened the risk factor in voting for Labour.

Mr Mawhinney ought not to dance before he has looked in more depth at what nur panel of young people is saying. Young people of the West Midlands may have a spicier-girlish perspective on political leadership, but they are also making two other judgements. One is that Labour is a party of ideas. Youth may be cynical about Labour's capacity to "do things" in office but the erstwhile party of the left still seems to these young people to be the carrier of hope for change. The second should worry Tory strategists more.

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Young people – they undoubtedly share this view with their elders – do not see Labour as a threat.

Which brings us on to the Tories' third song; or rather, warning siren. It is a warning that voting Labour is a "gambit", a risk to your own purse and pocket. But Labour's great achievement of the past year must be the way it has made itself financially safe for power. It has neutralised the charge that it cannot be trusted with management of the public money.

Nevertheless, Labour must still guard its flanks. This week the Cabinet's records for 1966 are opened. The sea-

men's strike that year will be recollected, along with the activist past of such Labour notables as Prescott. Undue proximity to old-style unionism still holds an electoral danger for Labour. While John Monks of the Trades Union Congress strives to redefine a 21st-century relationship between organised labour and the state, some of his colleagues seem to hanker for the past. The corporatism that John Edmonds of the GMB wants is unpalatable to most people, including union members.

But making Labour safe is not the same as making Labour attractive. Too much attention can (and will be) paid

to Tony Blair's personality. Indifferent or low ratings in the personality stakes can be lived with. At her apogee, Margaret Thatcher enjoyed some grim figures for public appreciation of her bearing, voice and persona; she did not win because of her teeth. But Mr Blair's deficit serves to expose Labour's electoral problem. The Tories are disunited, for all the strips of veneer applied by honest John and Michael Heseltine; their economic record (taxes and ejection from the Exchange Rate Mechanism) will dog them till polling day. But, perceiving that electors will not automatically make it Mr Blair's day. They need a positive reason to vote Labour, and they are not sure they see it yet.

This gap has been noticeable for some months now. It is not about some shopping list of policies – especially one carefully pruned to excise any commitments to spend more. It is more Labour's lack of a theme, along the lines of President Bill Clinton's successful bid to identify himself with what Americans call "soccer moms" – working women with children. Labour has songs with immense popular appeal, about the common condition of society, about order, equity and the effectiveness of social institutions, especially schools. What the people want are more riffs – aphorisms like Tony Blair's own brilliant coinage about crime and its causes.

Labour has its causes. If it is going

Shock horror: children still read

The first thing to say about any research on children's reading habits – like that today from Surrey University – is that children still have them. That horror emerged as the most popular category for younger teenagers' reading should offend no one. (Advocates of Victorian values especially should consult the bestseller lists in Wilkie Collins's day.) What matters is that imagination is still fed from the printed page – despite television, despite computers and despite the real and alleged inadequacies of the schools.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Put children at centre of adoption law

Sir: John Major is a caring family man and it has to be assumed that his determination to introduce a radical reform of the adoption system ("Adoption law to curb political correctness", 28 December) is not a cynical piece of electioneering but rather has its origins in a briefing by proponents of "privatised" adoption in the United States.

Unfortunately the Prime Minister may be unaware of the complex and sensitive issues which need to be taken into account.

Those professionals engaged in child care, whether social workers, foster parents or lawyers, agree that all children need the security of a stable family life if they are to thrive. Everyone is horrified by the numbers of older children who live in residential homes before leaving care without that stability.

The new fashionable solution is to decree that all children who are taken into care shall be adopted if they are not returned home within, say, a year or 18 months. Because fewer adoptive placements than foster placements break down, it is argued that this will provide greater security. Inefficiency by local authorities in finding adoptive homes will be overcome by the use of private agencies.

This approach overlooks a number of important matters. It is not in the interests of all children in care to be legally and, in some cases psychologically, separated from their families. Not all children come into care because they have been rescued from abusive and uncaring parents. Many have loving families who are unable to look after them because of ill health or because of the demands of siblings. They may need to live apart from them but still remain part of the family.

While adoptive homes may have a lower rate of failure, it is important to compare like with like. A toddler or young child is less likely to be disturbed than an older child, and the greater the disturbance the more pressure is placed on the new family. More substitute families are needed but private agencies may not be the solution to finding them. Local authorities have been using private agencies for two decades.

This government has already given these problems detailed consideration for the last seven years. A review of adoption law was initiated in 1989, and a White Paper, "Adoption: The Future", was published in 1993. A Bill was published at the beginning of this year which places the interests of the individual child at the centre of all decisions which have to be made. Its measures have wide support.

If the Prime Minister genuinely wishes to help children in care – and I believe he does – he should ensure that time is made available now for legislation or commit his future government to introduce the Bill in the first session after the election.

JOHN MITCHELL

Family Law Chambers

London EC4

Sir: There are indeed 55,000 children in local authority care. However, over 40,000 of these children are already placed in substitute families with varying levels of support from local authorities. The remaining 15,000 are in residential care and 90 per cent of these are adolescents.

The vast majority of these young



people are in residential care because attempts to place them in substitute families have failed – so great has been the initial damage that they have suffered at the hands of their original families.

In your great credit, you have been highlighting the efforts being made to track down the victims of abuse in residential care in the Seventies and Eighties, but no one seems to be prepared to ask why it happened and continues to happen.

A glance at Sir William Utting's 1991 report "Children in Public Care" provides the answer. He reviewed residential standards and called them "deplorable".

In the two children's homes I worked in this summer, only one of the 19 staff had a qualification.

The system of promotion is based entirely on time-serving.

Add to this "privatised care" and the simple fact that within the new dispensation these unqualified people can set up their own children's homes, and you have a situation which in any other field of social policy would be regarded as intolerable.

So why do we tolerate it? Well, firstly the "clients" are children who have no voice.

Secondly – money. To recruit and train staff for this difficult and demanding work so that at least 50 per cent have reached degree level would cost millions, money that no government is prepared to spend.

Yet curiously we are prepared to pick up the social cost once these young people leave care; 15,000 of our prison population have been in care, exactly the same number currently languishing there.

It is justified because the reforms

Patten to blame for Peking move

Sir: What is truly "stomach-turning", to use Governor Chris Patten's phrase, is the ease with which he can use the press to pounce on Peking and exonerate himself for the replacement next July of the sitting Hong Kong Legislative Council by an appointed interim chamber ("Patten lashes 'sick' plan for Hong Kong", 21 December). The Chinese authorities' reaction of that process – and what Peking is now doing is switching to "rewind".

NEVILLE MAXWELL
Oxford

It is necessary because,

consequent on Mr Patten's actions,

the constituency basis on which the council was elected in 1995 did not conform with the constitution

Peking, up with Britain's co-operation,

had drawn up for Hong Kong when

it reverts to China. China

insistently warned before the

Patten "reforms" were

implemented that they meant the

sitting council would have to be

stood down at midnight on 30 June 1997 – entirely unacceptable imposed on Peking by Mr Patten.

It is reasonable because the

government of post-transition

Hong Kong will need a legislature

and because instant elections

would overload a new

administration. Therefore a

nominated body is needed to serve

until a new council can be elected

in 1998 on the constituency basis

agreed between Britain and China

before Mr Patten's appointment.

It is justified because the reforms

Non-smokers resent insults

Sir: Why must smokers like Jo Brand (21 December), who seem to be perfectly civilised in other respects, seek to justify the nuisance their addiction causes to the non-smoking majority by insulting us?

Are we really "po-faced" or, as recently suggested elsewhere, "health Nazis", simply because we dislike being forced to breath foul-smelling, carcinogenic smoke and to have our clothes and hair made to stink of it?

I suspect that many people who enjoy smoking simply do not understand how unpleasant it is for those of us who do not. Personally, I would as soon spend an evening in a garage full of diesel fumes.

I wish Jo and her fellow smokers joy of their habit. All I ask is that they have the basic courtesy to respect my preference not to share it.

JANET RUSSELL
Tollesbury, Essex

Double, double ...

Sir: I was delighted to see your front-page account (21 December) of the invocation of witchcraft to ensure the safety of Channel Tunnel passengers. With the winter solstice having a four-year cycle "in which the forces of earth, air, fire and water are involved", clearly one cannot be too careful.

This evident allusion to a combination of hydrogen derived

from nil out of the earth, nitrogen and oxygen taken from the air, their reaction at glowing red temperatures and passage beneath the sea, is a most evocative reference to the manufacture of ammonium nitrate fertiliser and its transportation through the tunnel.

It is too much to hope that this positive action for the sake of public safety taken by the witches of the Covenant of Earth Magic be supplemented by the wizards of the Health and Safety Executive casting their own spell, declaring this substance to be classified as explosive and forbidding its continued transportation through the tunnel before a wagon-load gets too close to a fire?

Dr SIDNEY ALFORD
Corsham, Wiltshire

Arts goalposts

Sir: Your report on the Policy Studies Institute's recent study on funding of the cultural sector (Arts Notebook, 21 December) implies that the study has limited relevance because the Government has – through the Lottery – recently "moved the goalposts on arts funding".

An important objective of the study was to see whether this has indeed been the case. Its concentration on the year 1993/94 means it provides a baseline for judging what has happened – where the goalposts initially stood, how far they have been moved, if at all, and, if so, in what direction.

At an apposite moment, this is what the researchers intend to do.

BERNARD CASEY
RACHAEL DUNLOP
SARA SELWOOD
Policy Studies Institute
London NW1

Trustees failed Royal Academy

Sir: It is understandable that the Royal Academy's secretary, David Gordon, should seek to play down the magnitude of the institution's recently disclosed financial and managerial predicament. But David Lister's impression ("Why Monet was the root of art evil", 16 December) that help might be coming from the Academy's "multi-millionaire trustees" is surely misplaced: had such support been available, it would not have been necessary, in the first place, to take and use as revenue £1m of trust funds earmarked for capital projects.

Even this, it seems, was insufficient to keep the Academy solvent while funding its present £7m annual administration cost. It was only the simultaneous withholding of £200,000 of pension fund payments that enabled the Academy to stay within its £2.25m overdraft facility.

Perhaps the trustees will now dig into their own pockets. But, as things stand, it must be said that it seems an extraordinary check for them and the administrators to use the fact of the crisis they have presided over in secrecy as a justification for an increase in their own powers at the expense of those of the academicians. Quite correctly, the membership has now twice refused to cede authority to the secretary's proposed new governing body, which would be dominated by trustees and salaried administrators.

One would hope that – even if they make no noises of contrition – the secretary and trustees will now have the grace to allow the members themselves to decide, in the wake of the present administrative débâcle, how, and by whom, their own house might best be put back in order.

MICHAEL DALEY
Director
ArtWatch UK
Barnet, Hertfordshire

Why bus rage?

Sir: It is possible that the destruction of 37 buses in Bolton was caused by neither mindless vandalism nor commercial sabotage, but rather by the calculated, if perverse, action of people incensed at being robbed of their mobility by the withdrawal of all bus services over the Christmas holidays ("Vandal wrecks bus fleet", 28 December).

If motorists were forbidden to use their cars at Christmas all hell would break loose, but lesser mortals are expected to accept their lot with equanimity. Maybe this misguided and destructive action was a cry of protest from those who see their enforced immobility as yet another symptom of society's accelerating bias against the poor.

ALLAN HORSEY
Chairman, The Bus Users' Society
Manchester

Model males

Sir: In response to Jack O'Sullivan's call for new role models for men in 1997 ("Men plumb the depths of bad behaviour", 26 December), my own hero list is: Frank Zappa, Jean-Paul Gaultier, John Kenneth Galbraith and Brian Eno.

I guess that means I want to be a rock composer with a kilo, a degree in economics and a bald head. Does anyone have better ideas?

JEREMY C HENTY
Cambridge

Sept 10 1996

Thank goodness for middle-class angst over jobs

Jobs, glorious jobs: they will be dripping from the trees in the new year if all this upbeat talk on the economy is to be believed. Employment prospects are the best for seven years, according to a survey out today from the employment agency Manpower. Coming hot on the heels of the record drop in unemployment reported last month, and the booming Christmas shopping figures, the jobs news is positive indeed.

Big jobs, little jobs, fat jobs, thin jobs: take your pick, for it seems there is a veritable employment army looming. Well, on the basis of the old economic adage that what goes down must, given time, bounce back up again, the news is hardly surprising. But the curious thing is that nobody nut in the Labour market seems too cheerful about jobs growth this time round. Too many little thin jobs and not enough fat juicy ones, is the general complaint – and it is voiced loudest among the chattering classes. The new jobs – they tell us – are fragile creatures, liable to upend and die long before the next recession arrives. Even worse, according to the apocalyptic pundits, this new fragility problem is hitting the middle classes particularly hard. Whether it be through downsizing, out-sizing or casualisation, something insidious out there is troubling our middle classes, traumatising our national culture, and undermining economic optimism for all. In case you missed it, job insecurity is the zeitgeist for the end of the century.

Which story should we believe? The Government is backing the glorious jobs tale; the journalists, insecurity. Neither are to be trusted. The Government's interest in talking up the labour market is clear. But journalists should declare their own preoccupation, too. How many times in the past few years have we seen articles or documentaries on shaky professional jobs and the anxious graduates who fill them?

In respect of what is going on in the rest of the country, the publishing world and the media, including national newspapers, have shifted a lot of employees into temporary contracts and freelance work. That and rising competition for popular jobs are understandably making the hacks feel insecure. And that is why there is so much fuss about the new middle-class problem.

The real story about the labour market is rather different from both these special-interest views. Yes, as the Government claims, new jobs are being created. But a surprising proportion of these jobs are indeed part-time or temporary. That horrible anxiety feeling of trying to cling to your pay cheque haunts an awful lot of people. But to characterise this anguish and uncertainty as a wholly middle-class problem is ludicrous.

OK, we well-educated professional people may have a little to moan about. Two-thirds of the additional professional jobs created in the first four years of recovery were temporary. But middle-class insecurity may well be as temporary as those new jobs.

Think back to the height of the Eighties boom. An awful lot of people switched from one job to another very fast. Because companies were growing, workers found opportunity



Yvette Cooper

Forget those temporary contracts for computer analysts or market researchers, and consider instead the security guards, the shop assistants ...

their professional peers.

Even worse: between the odd week's work here and there is the dole. Government statistics show that an astonishing half of new claimants signing on have been on the dole before – and within the past year. A worryingly large group of people are becoming trapped in a weird world on the edge of the labour market, stumbling in and out of jobs.

The world of work seems to be polarising. The insiders have the skills to adapt, get new jobs and earn higher wages; the outsiders skirt along the edges, lacking the skills to break into permanent work.

Faced with this kind of portrait of the Nineties workplace, there is something rather attractive about middle-class insecurity. After all, if we are ever going to create the political will and the democratic consensus to do something about the problems of the poor and the low-skilled, we may need to persuade everyone else that they have something to gain as well. Nobody worried much about vulnerable employees when they were all manual workers. Life-long learning and retraining could have been very useful for the manufacturing workers who lost their jobs in the Eighties. But adult education has only become sexy since professional workers realised that they could benefit from it too, as they switched between jobs and careers.

Middle-class job insecurity could be a powerful force for change. Let us hope that the new government can capitalise on it and tackle the worse insecurity felt by those at the very bottom of the jobs pile.

Liam and Co play the Nineties game of pop stardom with post-modern aplomb, says Peter Popham

Oasis after the orgy



world-famous and then set off on their long trajectory towards ultimate disintegration, everything they did was for the first time: they were the first band to have long hair, the first to flirt with the mystic East, the first to take LSD, the first to have problems with their wives. Together with the rather different stories generated by The Stones, Hendrix, The Doors and so on, the myth of pop stardom was invented, with every conceivable wrinkle from madness and murder to boredom and insanity already in place.

Thirty years on, after the whole thing has been rebashed over and over again, all that remains is to repeat what has gone before. That is

perhaps why the media are so keen to see the back of all the new bands as quickly as possible – it is the bore-dom of it all, the sheer predictability. But seeing as there is nothing new to be done, seeing as everything has already been tried, Oasis hit upon a novel solution: do everything that can be done, however contradictory and irreconcilable, at the same time.

In this they showed that they have the one key qualification for serious pop fame, far more important than musical ability: they are instinctively in tune with the spirit of the age. The French sociologist Jean Baudrillard foresaw such a solution to the problem of contemporary fame in his book *The Transcendence of Evil* (1990).

What do we do, he asks, "after the orgy"? After "the moment when modernity exploded upon us, the moment of liberation in every sphere" – the time, in Philip Larkin's formulation, ushered in by the *Lady Chatterley* trial and The Beatles' first LP. "Now all we can do is simulate the orgy, simulate liberation. We may pretend to carry on in the same direction, accelerating, but in reality we are accelerating in a void, because all the goals of liberation are already behind us... We are obliged to replay all scenarios precisely because they have all taken place already..."

In 1996, Oasis have contrived to replay all scenarios that are available in a pop group. They fight, they kiss,

they take the celebrity girlfriend home to mum; they boast about taking drugs, they lend support to a campaign against drugs, they conspicuously consume, they give abundantly to charity (more than £1m in all); they sneer and spit and swear, they turn out to play football for a good cause. They split, re-form, split, re-form, split, re-form – or perhaps they never split at all, and it's just silly rumours. In this way, by flying in all directions at once, they do what is otherwise very difficult these days: they mesmerise our attention.

They also contribute to oversee the most spookily post-modern development in pop music ever. "Nothing", Baudrillard went on to say, "... now disappears by coming in an end, by dying. Instead, things disappear through proliferation or contamination... or as a result of the epidemic of simulation, as a result of their transfer into the secondary existence of simulation." With uncanny instinct, Oasis smile benignly at the "epidemic of simulation" that now surrounds them: a swelling aureola of tribute bands, No Way Sis, Oasis' Oasis, Quoasis and Champagne Supernova, to name a few, who wear their clothes and play their songs as faithfully as possible at more or less bumble gigs up and down the land. The most prominent of them, No Way Sis, now have a record contract of their own. It can't be long before they spawn a tribute band of their own.

At the still centre of all this strange and frenzied activity are two working-class Mancunians. One of whom, Noel, is down to earth and clever enough to let the whole thing spin on as it must, whatever strange place it may end up in.

One day, too, he may write a song that bears comparison with anything on The Beatles' *Revolver*. But it hasn't happened yet.

The art of big-time pop celebrity involves being impossible to ignore, no matter what it takes. We had already bad enough of Oasis in 1995: 1996 should have been the year they died and disappeared. Indeed, much of the media spent much of the year predicting that event. Many of the stories that kept the band in the headlines were intimations of imminent disaster, the ritualistic paroxysms that band after band has undergone during the past 30-odd years, preceding break-up due to "musical differences": feuds and fights, a cancelled tour of the United States, walk-outs, tantrums, girlfriend distractions, recording studio bust-ups. The new album was postponed and postponed again. Liam was arrested padding along Oxford Street early one November morning, allegedly the worse for drugs. And so on.

But the inevitable did not come: each pratfall, by some dreamlike logic, carried the band to a higher place, a secure fame. The only thing that kept the papers talking about them was the imminence of their demise, yet like martial artists Oasis converted all the negative energy and denial into affirmation and acclaim.

At the end of 1996, Oasis are bigger than ever, bigger than anyone since The Beatles and The Rolling Stones at their peak. They have sold 15 million records worldwide. *Morning Glory* alone has sold eight million. In May, they became the fastest-selling pop group in history, when half-a-million fans telephoned for tickets in five minutes. At Knebworth in August, where they played two concerts, both to 250,000 fans, and one of the concerts was relayed live to radio stations in 34 countries, they made film.

Alone among their peers, Oasis demand comparison with The Beatles. But when The Beatles became

Tony's wonder year: a look back at 1997

by Polly Toynbee



There is a sense that progress is possible, after the years of looking back to an imaginary golden era

Imagine you have slept soundly for exactly a year, and today is December 30th, 1997. You have missed a lot. Much has happened, much has changed: you need bringing up to date.

When you fell asleep, the ship of state was on the rocks with a mutinous crew. Those shipwrecked mariners now sit glowering and confused upon the opposition benches, still in shock after 18 years of government, 50 seats short of power.

If you had any doubts about whether New Labour would actually do anything when they won the election, let me set your mind at rest. Tony Blair knew that after his great victory he had only a short time to grab the initiative before the intractability of government fell upon him.

First came the promised Constitutional Act, giving some independence to Scotland. The rest of us were bored rigid by this Celtic stuff: only 8 per cent of the population lives in Scotland, after all. One more earnest Dimbleby forum from Edinburgh on the West Lothian question, and the rest of us would gladly have expelled them from the union altogether.

It made us English resentful. What was so special about the Scots? They feel oppressed by Westminster? Well, so do we all, especially Londoners, who live under its very shadow without any self-government.

Blair acted quickly to involve the rest of us. He added in reform of the Lords, abolishing hereditary peers and removing the appointment of life peers by politicians. They are now chosen by the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Arts, the medical Royal Colleges, the Sports Council and other august bodies of the great and good. There are no bishops nor any representatives of other religions, as the Bill also disestablished the Church.

In truth, though, the arcane debate on the powers of the new second chamber threatened to be as boring as the Celts. So Tony Blair chose the moment to go for proportional representation for the Commons, ensuring we would never risk a Portillo, Howard or Redwood government in future. And probably guaranteeing Labour a second term.

At the same time the Commons was reformed: a complaints tribunal has been set up, giving rapid redress in patients, including some compensation, but withdrawing the right of patients to sue. Contraception clinics for the young are now universal so every secondary-school pupil has a nurse or clinic to attend, close by and confidential. Teenage pregnancy rates are already falling.

A Royal Commission on Social Security is about to sweep away the old National Insurance system. There will be automatic entitlements for any new claimants for sickness,

unemployment or pensions: money will only be paid out according to need. Labour dares to be far tougher on workfare schemes (under a new name) doing genuinely useful work, despite trade union objections. The quid pro quo is a raft of well-financed, individualised training and education programmes.

Private schools have been nationalised and brought under the control of a commission headed by George Walden, the former Tory MP: it was his idea.

They have become super-schools for the brights, regardless of means. As it stands, middle-class parents of averagely-intelligent children that they will soon be using the state system, they are already turning their attention to the condition of local schools.

The defence budget has been halved, to bring it in line with the rest of Europe. It will take time for the money to come in

because of old contracts for useless fighter planes and tanks. But it will rise at least £10bn. We are bargaining to give up our permanent seat on the UN Security Council, in exchange for reform of the whole organisation. We have told the Northern Irish that they will have self-government in six months' time, and that our troops will leave, forever. We will not play nanny any longer, so if they want to go on fighting, that's up to them.

Billions have been saved by stopping the huge prison-building programme. In several strong speeches, Jack Straw has told judges to consider sentences that work, with proven

track records for rehabilitation. Lord Tumlin has been given money saved from prison building to set up a huge new crime-busting package, investing in prison regimes that reduce reoffending and schemes for young offenders outside prison that work.

Lord Will Hutton heads a Commission on the City of London. He will devise ways of actually implementing his own proposals on making banks and institutions invest for the long-term good of the country. The Bank of England has been made independent.

Lord Melvyn Bragg has been given the Department of National Heritage, because no politicians know anything about the arts. He has cancelled the millennium celebration in Greenwich, because it is too expensive for a temporary building. But he has set up a commission on ownership of the media, to consider severe restrictions on the amount of the market controlled by any one company. Labour won a big enough majority to feel no threat now from Murdoch.

As more die of CJD from BSE-infected meat, Labour made maximum use of the disaster to promote a new agricultural policy. We no longer fight a futile battle to foist our poisoned produce on our rightly suspicious neighbours. As a mark of our atonement for BSE, we direct subsidies to make British produce a symbol of the very highest quality, farmed for organic purity. We may import cheaper meat and vegetables, but we shall export only the best. It makes economic sense to move upmarket.

Two good private members' bills tested the water and inflamed debate. Paul Flynn came top of the MPs' poll and brought in one to abolish the monarchy. Another bill sought to decriminalise cannabis and Ecstasy. Neither got near the statute books, of course. But in the excited debate, public opinion moved a long way in favour of both and the young felt more involved in politics.

So much far policy. All this has left the country reeling. But change was what they voted for. There is a sense that something can be done, progress is possible, problems are not insoluble, after all these years of looking backwards to an imaginary golden era. Many people used to fulminate about New Labour's pre-election caution, but it got them elected. Few thought Blair had the determination to act so decisively. But be seized the day.

Her fourth birthday may well be her last, but she isn't ill



She's poor

In countries like the Gamble, one in four children die before their fifth birthday. The diseases they suffer from differ. But the cause is almost always the same. Poverty.

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obituaries / gazette

Professor S. Herbert Frankel

S. Herbert Frankel was a Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford, and Professor in the Economics of Underdeveloped Countries at Oxford University from 1946 until 1971. Born in South Africa in 1903, he lived a life closely intertwined with the fate of the British Empire, with its triumphal expansion following the First World War and its rapid contraction after the Second.

His father, a German-Jewish immigrant, had arrived in Johannesburg in 1896; as an "enemy alien" had fled the country during the First World War to escape internment, leaving his wife to hire up the children alone from 1915 to 1920; and then managed to build up a small produce company. (Under the leadership of Frankel's brother, Rudy, this business eventually developed into a major South African conglomerate, the Tiger Oats and National Milling Company.)

With an MA from Johannesburg and a PhD from the LSE, Frankel was appointed professor of economics at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg at the age of 28 and, over the next 15 years, led an extraordinarily active life, combining the roles of academic economist, economic adviser and social critic. It was in this period that he formed that complex of beliefs to which he would remain firmly loyal thereafter, regardless of changing academic fashions and political constellations.

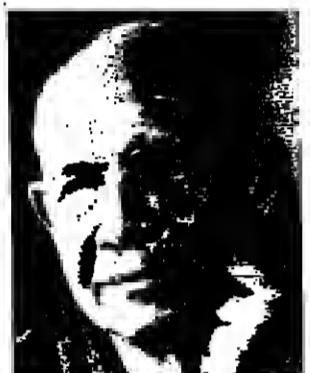
To ensure both economic growth and public welfare, he always maintained, it was essential that governments encourage an environment – political, social, cultural – in which private enterprise, individual initiative and capital accumulation could freely develop at every level of society. This credo, of course, put him at odds not only with various monopolistic enterprises (the railway company, for example), but also with the entire system of racial discrimination which, even before the official establishment of apartheid in 1948, denied the vast majority of the population in South Africa any chance of advancement.

Frankel developed views in a series of books – *Co-operation and Competition in the Marketing of Matzo in South Africa* (1926); *Railway Policy of South Africa* (1928); and *Capital Investment in Africa: its course and effects* (1938); as an economic adviser over a 20-year period to the South African statesman and liberal, Jan Hofmeyr (Minister of Finance during the Second World War under General Smuts); and as a founding editor of the *Forum*, weekly committed to the gradual destruction of race barriers speaking (as Frankel put it) for "the conscience of South Africa". As a member of Hofmeyr's inner circle, Frankel wrote far and helped produce *Coming of Age* (1930), a collection of articles on the future of South Africa which called for a "political system [built] not upon the treacherous basis of sectional interest but upon the broad and sure foundation of a common civilisation". One of Frankel's contributions (co-authored) to the book was characteristically on "The Poor White and Native". Among his students, and later colleagues, at Witwater-

srand was Helen Suzman, in future years to become the leader of the anti-apartheid Progressive Party, and who always remained a close friend.

It was during his South African years that Frankel first began to serve frequently as a member of official inquiry commissions – a duty that took up much of his time throughout the 1940s and 1950s. He was certainly well aware that the reports ardently produced by such inquiries were most often rated to be ignored and shelved. But one could not be sure, and the work suited her temperament perfectly, taking him out of the ivory tower and into the workplace and the farm, to the homes of district commissioners and to meetings with tribal chiefs, across the vast stretches of the African continent.

He enjoyed the give-and-take of the committees and the challenge of hammering out consensus among the members. Mentions can be made of three



Frankel: money and liberty

among many such commissions: the Committee on Miners' Pensions (1941) which recommended – in vain – a system of social insurance based on loss of earnings; the working party on the East African groundnut scheme (1950), which successfully called for the project's abandonment; and the Royal Commission on East Africa (1953–55) which, among other things, recommended the gradual replacement of tribal by individual land tenure.

It was something of a irony that with his move to England immediately after the Second World War, Frankel once again found himself in a rather embattled position – the same system of beliefs which had made him a critic of incipient apartheid now led to his relative isolation among Oxford economists, who tended to see in him if not a downright reactionary, then at least an anachronistic colonial. He remained the sceptic at a time when the take-off of underdeveloped countries was widely understood in terms of econometric models, central planning, massive inputs of aid and the extrapolation of growth rates.

Development in the Third World, Frankel insisted, depended not so much on the application of general theories as on the specific cultural, social and economic heritage of a given country, on its ability to apply an equitable and stable system of finance and law enforcement. Or as he himself put it: "Those who wish to develop Africa must hasten slowly, working with nature and not against it." Or again: "Economic progress results from the curbing of political power."

Looking for forums where he

could share common ground with fellow academics, Frankel in 1950 became a member of the Mont Pelerin Society (EA. Hayek and Milton Friedman were among its members); and for some years he served as a visiting professor at the University of Virginia where the economics department, under the direction of Warren Nutter (later an Assistant Secretary of Defence in the Reagan administration), was conservatively – or as Frankel would have preferred it, "liberally" – inclined. In his autobiography, *An Economist's Testimony* (1992), Frankel expressed regret that over the years the philosophers and historians had largely dropped out of the Mont Pelerin Society, leaving it to the economists. And much of his own writing in later years straddled these various disciplines, most notably perhaps his *Money: two philosophies* (*the conflict of trust and authority*) (1977) and *Money and Liberty* (1980).

In Oxford, he found his most congenial settings first in Nuffield College, where he felt able to contribute actively to the development of what was then (just after the war) a still very new institution (and indeed still not built); and second – after his retirement in 1971 – in the Oxford Centre for Post-graduate Hebrew Studies. Here, too, he enjoyed the challenge of new beginnings and Oxford has become an important centre of Jewish studies.

By no means an observant Jew, Frankel was nonetheless committed to the ideas of Jewish peoplehood and he dated his Zionist beliefs back to the First World War. In 1936, he went to Jerusalem to help Chaim Weizmann prepare the evidence he presented by the Jewish Agency to the Royal Commission on Palestine chaired by Earl Peel (it eventually recommended a partial partition of the country). Of his draft report, Frankel later wrote self-deprecatingly that Lewis Namier, another adviser, "reduced what I had written by a half without the omission of a single idea".

During and immediately after the Second World War, Frankel did much to safeguard the infant diamond-cutting production in Palestine and Israel, now a major export industry.

Herbert Frankel was a man of great charm: a natural raconteur, with a remarkable memory for a telling anecdote from his varied life. He made friends easily and from all walks of life; and his friendships were long-lasting. For many years the home of Herbert and his wife, Ilse, on Hinksey Hill, Oxford, was a centre of hospitality for colleagues, students, friends and family. In recent years, he continued to follow events closely and to keep his spirits high. He found a certain satisfaction in the respective achievements of Nelson Mandela and Margaret Thatcher.

Jonathan Frankel

Sally Herbert Frankel, economist, born 22 November 1903; Professor of Economics, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 1931–46; Professor in the Economics of Underdeveloped Countries, Oxford University 1946–71 (Emeritus); married 1928 Ilse Frankel (one son, one daughter); died 12 December 1996.

Leslie Poles Hartley, novelist, 1895; Sir Carol Reed, film director, 1906. Deaths: Richard, Duke of York, killed, 1460; Pope Innocent IX, 1591; John Turville Needham, priest and scientist, 1781; Amelia Jenks Bloomer, social reformer, 1894; Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin, peasant and mystic, murdered 1916; Robert Louis Stevenson, author, 1894; Maurice Denis, painter, novelist and art critic, 1943; Tygre Halvahn Lie, first secretary-general of the United Nations, 1968; Richard Charles Rodgers, composer, 1979. On this day: the Yorkists suffered a defeat at the Battle of Wakefield, 1460; Scindhabai, Maharajah of Gwalior, submitted to the British, 1803; Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *The Pirates of Penzance* had its first performance at Alperton, Devon, 1879; Paul Kruger declared the Transvaal to be a republic, and became its first president, 1880; Zanzibar was annexed by Natal, 1873; France transferred sovereignty to Vietnam, 1949. Today is the Feast Day of St Ansuya, St Ansuya, St Egwun and St Sabius of Spoleto.

Birthdays

Mr Arnold Allan, former chairman, UK Atomic Energy Authority, 72; Mr Gordon Banks, footballer, 59; Mr David Bedford, athlete, 47; Professor Sir Roy Calne, surgeon and immunologist, 66; Mr Anthony Crisp QC, 83; Mr Geraint Davies, controller, BBC Wales, 53; Mr Bo Didley, singer, composer and guitarist, 68; General Sir David Fraser, former US representative to NATO, 76; Sir Archibald Hamilton MP, 55; Lord Harrington, former speaker of the House of Commons, 39; Sir John Houghton, former chief scientific adviser to the Met Office, 62; Lord Howick of Glendale, a former racing director, Baring Bros, 59; Dame Rosalind Hurley, microbiologist, 67; Mr Mark Kaplan, violinist, 43; The Right Rev Peter Mott, Bishop of North Norfolk, 62; Mrs Gwenwyn Randall, Head, Framlington College, 46; Sir Albert Robson, former High Commissioner in the UK for Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 81; Mr Nick Skeleton, show jumper, 36; Lord Tostowry, former member of the Stock Exchange, 81; Miss Tracey Ultman, actress and comedienne, 37; Mr David G. Wadsworth, Chief Education Officer for Bedfordshire, 52; Sir David Willcocks, former director, Royal College of Music, 77; Mr Clifford Williams, former associate director, the Royal Shakespeare Company, 70.

Anniversaries

The following appointments have been announced by the Church of England:

The Rev Mark Alber, Assistant Curate, West Derby St Mar, to be Precentor-in-charge, Arfield St Margaret, and Chaplain, Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool; Curate-in-charge, Cawood, and Curate-in-charge, Ryde St James, Proprietary Chapel (Wrexham); to be on the staff of the Atheneum, Liverpool.

Church appointments

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Designs which emphasise visual, rather than textual, solutions to problem solving: above, book illustration from *Listen! Listen!* (1970)

Paul Rand

Paul Rand was one of the most influential graphic designers of the 20th century. Although he is not widely known to the public, his work is universally and instantly recognisable – in particular the enduring logotypes he designed over the past 40 years for leading US corporations such as IBM and Apple.

Rand was born in 1914 in Brooklyn, New York. He studied at the Pratt Institute (1929–32), Parsons School of Design (1932–33) and was taught by the graphic artist George Grosz at the Arts Student League (1933–34). Establishing his own studio in 1935, he was amongst the first to initiate what would become design consultancy. He emphasised the importance of the visual element in projecting an idea or identity, where previously text had been the pre-

dominant means of conveying these messages; and with this visual element, the crucial role of the graphic designer.

By 1937, aged only 23, he had achieved the position of art director of both *Equerre* and *Apparel Arts* magazines.

His studies into the European avant-garde art movements (among them Cubism, De Stijl, Constructivism, and the Bauhaus) significantly influenced these early years and his adaptation of their principles, combined with the inspiration he derived from American culture, developed into a highly individual graphic style. Montage, collage, painting, photography and typography all found a place in his designs, which emphasised visual, rather than textual, solutions to problem solving. His sharp creative ability and skilful reading of how design should communicate through its content led him to become widely influential whilst still in his twenties.

From 1941 to 1954 Rand worked for the William H. Weintraub advertising agency, where he applied his formidable design approach to advertisements. Collaborating with the copywriter Bill Bernbach he developed the integration of design and copy into a model of "design and copy into a model of the 'creative team'" approach – bringing together a group of people to exchange ideas – and thus anticipated a move that

would change the face of advertising in the post-war years. During the 1950s, when graphic design truly evolved, with an explosion in the worlds of television, publishing and corporate identity, Rand was one of the designers who became a seminal figure. From 1955 he freelanced, becoming a graphic consultant to leading US companies, and his work had a huge influence on the development of company corporate identity and its application: IBM, Cummins Engine Company, Westinghouse, United Parcel Service, ABC Television; all benefitted from his crisp, clear, concise logotypes.

His other important contribution to design was in education – he was appointed Professor of Graphic Design at Yale in 1956 and continued to lecture there for the following 36 years. His book *Thoughts on Design* (1946), illustrated with examples of his work, is regarded as a classic text on graphics, influential on successive generations of designers.

This legacy can be seen in the work of many of today's eminent designers. Alan Fletcher (one of the founding members of Pentagram, the design group) considers Paul Rand to be "the first guru of design"; Rand gave Fletcher, his first freelance work in the United States, for IBM, and thus anticipated a move that

work while a student, by a colleague, Richard McConnell (whose brother, the outstanding designer John McConnell of Pentagram, is undoubtedly a disciple of Rand's "ideas" approach to graphics). What excited me about it was that the designs were concerned with ideas and content, not just technique. This was design that encompassed both simplicity and clarity of message, by aesthetic and intellectual means, and which surpassed any notion of fashion.

It was through my own writings on design, which he encouraged, that I established a

friendship and correspondence with Rand over several years. He was unceasingly inquisitive about design in the UK (or Merrie England, as he called it) and anything related to design. His sharp wit, anecdotes and invaluable advice were a revelation to me. For a man in his seventies his acute perception of the world was that of a man of half his age.

In his later years Rand became increasingly disaffected with the vacuousness of much of contemporary graphic design, a subject for which he found expression in his brilliant book *Design, Form and Chaos* (1994). In it he wrote: "The absence of restraint, the equation of simplicity with shallowness, complexity with depth of understanding and obscurity with innovations, distinguishes the work of these times."

The last time we spoke, only a few days before he died, he was, as ever, looking to the future; the planning of a retrospective exhibition of his work to be held in New York and the publication of his latest book, *From Lascaux to Brooklyn* (1996).

Patrick Argent

Paul Rand, graphic designer; born Brooklyn, New York 1914; Professor of Graphic Design, Yale University 1956–92; married Marion Swannie (one daughter); died Norwalk, Connecticut 26 November 1996.

own recent essays, letters and late thoughts (expected publication date, February 1997).

The last book by Sir Laurens van der Post, writes Gopinder Panesar, was not as stated *The Admiral's Baby* but *The Secret River*, the retelling of a pan-African myth – and Sir Laurens's only children's picture book. It was published by Barefoot Books just a few weeks ago, and was of special significance to Sir Laurens, who recalled how in Africa his close friend T.C. Robertson had often described him as "one of the last of the barefoot boys".

Sir Laurens van der Post

Though his health was failing rapidly, Sir Laurens van der Post led a typically fast-paced life right through the final months of his 90th year, writes Robert Hinchliffe [see obituary]. In 1995 he travelled to Switzerland to comfort Meier in his final weeks. Back in London, he launched his new book, *The Admiral's Baby*, with readings, signings and interviews, followed shortly thereafter by a journey to one of his favourite "homes away from home", Zurich, where he was honoured with an award.

Sir Laurens was generous in his giving, especially of himself, and was turned to by his friends and acquaintances frequently in times of need. When one of his closest friends, C.A. Meier, lay dying in Zurich last year, van der Post, in pain and poor health himself, made three journeys to Switzerland to comfort Meier in his final weeks.

Without being overly nostalgic, he loved to relate the history of places, buildings and people to his younger friends, or to take them to a restaurant serving traditional English fare. He seemed to know every building on every road in Chelsea, and to travel his hack-street routes and hear his stories along the way was always a special treat.

Though not a regular churchgoer he was a thoroughly religious man. In the past 15 years, his own most treasured ritual was to travel to the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City – "my parish church", as he loved to call it – to deliver the sermon on the Fourth Advent Sunday.

Alas, most of his future projects will never be realised, but one that will is *The Rock Rabbit and the Rainbow - Laurens van der Post among friends* (Daimon, Einsiedeln, 1997): originally conceived as a Festschrift, it evolved in the course of the past year to become an amalgam that now includes several of his own recent essays, letters and late thoughts (expected publication date, February 1997).

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Andrewes goes on to consider the swaddling clothes, the crib and the stable. So low was the Lord come, the stable is a place for beasts not for Men. So low, in this sense, to wonder at. If it be well looked into, it is able to strike any man into ecstasy."

So here is the wonder: the eternal which makes itself present in time, the omnipresent in a limited space, the immortality in mortality, greatness in simplicity, the glories of heaven in the dirt and dung of a stable. There is nowhere else to look for him and, if we look elsewhere, we shall not find him.

Why then is he here, this infant, this un-speaking Word? To point the way to heaven, which is beyond all words. Why is he here, this Word become flesh? To bring heaven down to earth, so that we, who belong to earth, may find ourselves in heaven.

That is the wonder of Christmas.

Bringing heaven down to earth

Meanings of Christmas

The story of the birth of Christ has the power to change those who contemplate it.

The Right Rev Mark Santer, Bishop of Birmingham, explains why.

mystery? It is that (in the words of St John) "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." There is a paradox here, as we can see by looking back at the prophet Isaiah:

A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass,

and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades;

whereas the Word of God is eternal, the same yesterday, today and for ever.

Human flesh is like grass. It grows out of the earth, it flowers for a day, and then

returns to the earth from which it came.

"Dust to dust, earth to earth, ashes to ashes."

What is the heart of this transforming

Deaths

DOMESTIC Peter Andrew, much-loved husband of Jane, son of Fredy, sister of Janet, and son-in-law of John and Mary, died at home on 24 December, aged 47, after a long illness. Funeral at St Bride's Church, the home (corner of Fane Street and Wood Street), London, at 11 am, Friday 3 January. Followed by a family funeral in Norfolk. Family flowers. Donations if

business & city

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OFT turns up heat over code of practice



Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The gas and electricity industry regulators are facing pressure from the Office of Fair Trading to come up with a tough enforceable code of practice aimed at stamping out dubious sales tactics by rival suppliers in the move towards full domestic competition planned for 1998.

The OFT, the UK's overall competition watchdog, is to bring together the gas watchdog, Ofgas, and its counterpart in the electricity industry, Offer, at a private conference in January to discuss how a binding joint

code could be developed. The move follows pressure from the Gas Consumers Council to replace a controversial voluntary code produced by the gas industry, which even some independent suppliers have claimed was too weak.

It comes six weeks before the second large trial of household gas competition begins in the south of England. Some 1.5 million homes will be able to choose an alternative supplier to British Gas for the first time in Dorset, the former county of Avon, Kent and Sussex.

Sue Slipman, director of the Gas Consumers Council

(GCC), said she believed Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, had now accepted that Ofgas should play a bigger role in developing and policing an enforceable code of conduct.

Previously Ms Spottiswoode has argued that marketing was a matter for the OFT and local trading standards officers. However Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity watchdog, is already believed to be in favour of a binding code of practice, with Offer as the enforcement agency.

Ms Slipman explained: "I think it's now imperative that we have an enforceable code to put

the public's mind at rest and stamp out cowboy selling tactics. We need to sort this thing out before the second phase of competition comes in."

Eastern Gas, part of the Hanson group, recently faced criticism from the GCC and Ofgas following complaints about its doorstep marketing tactics in Kent. Some representatives of the company had allegedly told potential customers that British Gas was changing its name to "Eastern".

One independent domestic supplier competing in the trials, Calorite, has so far refused to sign up to a voluntary code of

practice on the grounds that it does not go far enough. Another, Ameravada Hess, has backed the GCC in pushing for a much tougher legally enforceable code.

Ofgas said the issue depended on the outcome of the OFT conference in the new year. "We're concerned that competition is being introduced fairly and that customers are not being hoodwinked. But you should wait and see what happens at the Office of Fair Trading conference. I'm not saying we won't take a stronger line but we are not ready to do that at the moment."



Clare Spottiswoode: Ofgas should have a bigger role

Sue Slipman: "Important to stamp out the cowboys"

Firms face sanctions over pensions

Nic Cicutti

Thousands of small and medium-sized firms could face fines and other legal sanctions through failing to implement provisions within the new Pensions Act in April 1997, a leading firm of benefit consultants warned yesterday.

Among the most common likely problems will be the failure to give members the option to nominate trustees to appoint auditors to pension schemes, maintain up-to-date accounts and keep separate bank accounts for trustees.

Johnstone Douglas, a pay and benefits firm which advises companies on how to convert their pension funds from final-salary to money-purchase schemes, yesterday blamed lack of time for the problem.

But Doug Johnstone, the company's managing director, added that he was concerned at the low levels of understanding by many firms of the changes that need to be implemented when the Pensions Act comes into force.

He said: "From our own experience, we believe that almost 90 per cent of small and medium-sized firms have not yet taken advice on the implications of the new legislation, and simply do not understand what needs to be done."

"There is a real danger that they are going to fail to comply by default. This will potentially affect many thousands of members of company schemes."

The deadline next April follows the passing by Parliament of the 1995 Pensions Act, sparked by the disappearance of more than £400m in pension funds belonging to past and present staff of companies owned by Robert Maxwell, the former media tycoon. His death in November 1991 and the hunt for the missing money sparked the Government's pension reforms.

The new Pensions Act, which many experts point out would



Striking it rich: Combined oil and gas tax revenues were estimated to have reached £54m a day in November

£20bn bonanza forecast from North Sea oil

Nic Cicutti

North Sea oil and gas revenues will contribute more than £30bn to the Exchequer over the next six years, according to unpublish forecasts by the Inland Revenue.

The Revenue expects North Sea revenues to reach £4.1bn during the 1997-98 tax year, tailing off slightly to £3.4bn by the year 2001-2002.

The figures come as a separate report by Royal Bank of Scotland, issued today, showed that provisional estimates of combined oil gas and oil tax revenues for November reached £54m per day, 21 per cent up on the same month in 1995.

The Revenue's forecast for future tax income, issued yesterday by the Scottish National Party, is based on output remaining at similar levels to today, while oil and gas prices stay broadly as at present.

Tax revenues are structured to take a larger proportion of any increase in the price of oil and gas. This year oil prices have surged from \$18 to around \$24 a barrel, taking the industry by surprise.

The SNP said a study by the University of Aberdeen, published in November showed that for each US\$1 increase in the price of a barrel of oil, the Government receives an extra

50 per cent in revenue. At \$16 a barrel, oil revenue alone between 1997 and 2000 will be almost £1bn, rising to £18bn if oil reaches \$22 a barrel.

Nicola Sturgeon, SNP energy spokeswoman and prospective parliamentary candidate in Glasgow Govan, said: "These figures confirm the massive contribution that Scotland's energy wealth will continue to make to the London Treasury."

"It is all the more staggering when you consider that Labour and Tory politicians in the 1970s telling us that the oil would not last 10 years. It was their way of making sure that we did not get any ambitious ideas."

Ms Sturgeon added that the revenue assumptions, which were part of the Inland Revenue's Budget calculations, were underpinned by a government statement that oil and gas reserves will last for the next 55 years. The SNP demand for Scottish independence meant these resources could be used to meet Scotland's priorities.

The Revenue figures come as a report by Royal Bank of Scotland, but later today, shows that UK oil and gas production rose to its highest level since October 1995. Provisional estimates of the daily combined oil and gas revenues show they were about £9.4m a day ahead of the November 1995 total.

Textile makers decide whether to throw in towel

Chris Godsmark

European textile manufacturers will decide this week whether to abandon their long-running legal battle against UK government aid for a controversial Taiwanese factory due to be built in Northern Ireland, following a recent defeat in the European Court.

Despite recent government figures showing that few firms have so far switched out of complicated and potentially expensive final-salary pension schemes, experts believe the trickle will turn into a flood after April, when the Act comes into force.

Mr Johnstone said: "There is a real danger [firms] are going to fail to comply with the Act by default and Opra may then step in to impose fines."

have so far spent some £60,000 fighting the £157m project planned by the Taiwanese Hualon Corporation.

Their objections have been on the grounds that it will create huge unnecessary production capacity in an industry which has already been drastically slimmed down.

To the outrage of existing textile companies, the Government has agreed to provide £61m in subsidies for the plant which will be built on a green-

field site in a deprived area north of Belfast and is planned to create 1,800 jobs.

Earlier this month the industry umbrella-group, the European Association for Apparel and Textiles, lost a European Court challenge against the decision by the European Commission to clear the aid package. Judges said no rules had been broken by the Commission when it approved the state aid.

Brussels-based lawyers acting

for the European producers have been examining the judgment and are likely to ask the court for further clarification. John Wilson, director general of the British Apparel and Textiles Confederation, said he had been deeply disappointed by the judgment and was discussing the way forward with his counterparts on the Continent.

He explained: "The court seems to be suggesting that is what they are going to do then we

should not contest it. That seems crazy to me. We are looking at several aspects of the ruling though there don't seem to be any points of law we can contest."

If the producers decide against an appeal it would provide a boost for Northern Ireland's Industrial Development Board (IDB), the government agency for inward investment, and clear the way for the plant's construction three years after the original announcement.

However, there are signs that the IDB is reviewing the scale of the aid package, which depends on the full number of jobs being created. The IDB's chief executive visited Taiwan earlier this month and is believed to have discussed the subsidy with Hualon.

Mr Wilson insisted the campaign mounted by producers had not been a total failure. It had succeeded in delaying the project and highlighted the crisis affecting the industry.

Call to replace Cadbury and Greenbury codes

Roger Trapp

The Cadbury and Greenbury codes on executive pay and corporate governance should be replaced by a clearer framework allowing businesses to be transparent and accountable about their values, an influential group of companies will urge today.

This would include heads of companies setting out consistently where their business is going, what it stands for, where success is expected to come from, who is crucial to the achievement of that success

and what could stop it from happening.

The recommendations are published by the Centre for Tomorrow's Company in its evidence to the Hampel Committee on Corporate Governance, the successor to the Cadbury Committee.

The centre, formed earlier this year by a group of businesses, says widespread adoption of this approach would create a common language of accountability and provide a framework for measuring and communicating present performance and future prospects.

It would also overcome one of the key causes of public cynicism about business - the tendency to have different messages for different audiences.

In its submission, the centre urges that the basis of the framework should be the agenda for action produced by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce's Tomorrow's Company Inquiry.

The centre's evidence in the Hampel Committee, which has taken over from the Cadbury Committee, is also a response to a "climate audit" carried

out among leading chief executives and chairmen by Greenly's, a management consultancy focusing on boardroom issues.

It found that there was widespread support for Cadbury and a more negative view of Greenbury, which was seen as a "knee-jerk response to public outcry". But even with Cadbury there was concern that it encouraged a "box-ticking, bureaucratic mentality".

The submission also urges the Hampel Committee to remind all listed companies that their legal duty is to the company as a whole and not to the holders of shares at any one time.

the important thing is to reach the point "where you don't ignore it but simply act naturally in its observance".

Martin Taylor of Barclays is reported regretting that the Cadbury code had prompted non-executive directors to concentrate on the "policing function of their role rather than the encouraging visionary aspect of the role".

The submission also urges the Hampel Committee to remind all listed companies that their legal duty is to the company as a whole and not to the holders of shares at any one time.

Labour hits at UK sell-off

Nic Cicutti

Almost two-thirds of all inward investment into the UK in 1995 involved existing British businesses being taken over by foreign companies, the Labour Party claimed yesterday.

Of the £14bn invested in the UK last year, about £8.5bn, or some 60 per cent, came from takeovers. These included the sale of Seabord, the regional electricity company, for £1.6bn to US utility Central & South West and the acquisition of South Western Electricity by Southern Company of Georgia for £1.1bn.

Stephen Byers, Labour's shadow employment minister, said: "The Tories constantly claim the UK attracts inward investment because we have no minimum wage and have opted out of the Social Chapter." These figures show such claims are misleading and are simply deceiving the British people... the reality is that the majority of inward investment comes from foreign investors making rich pickings of what is left of British industry.

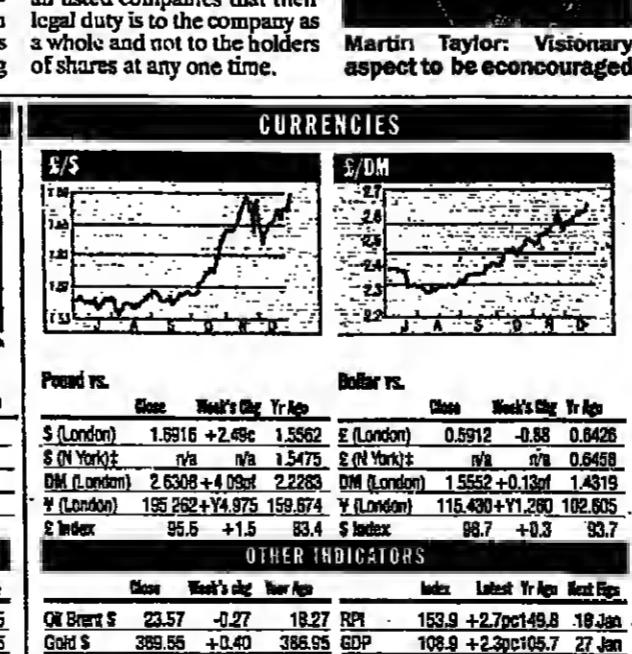
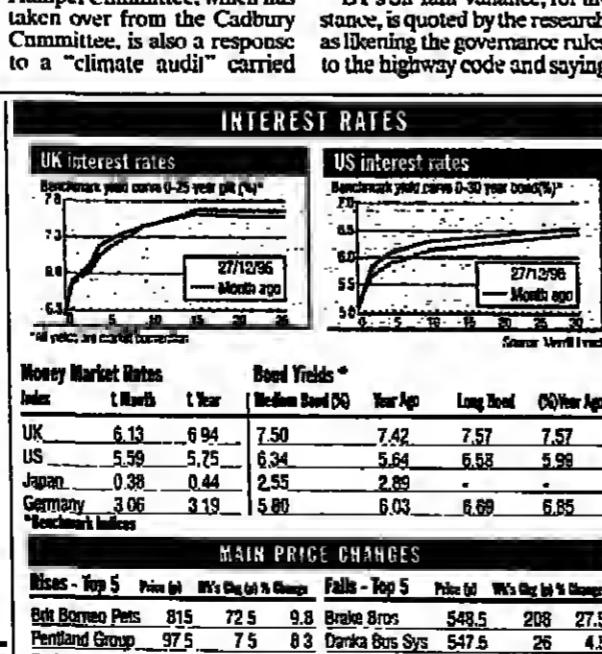
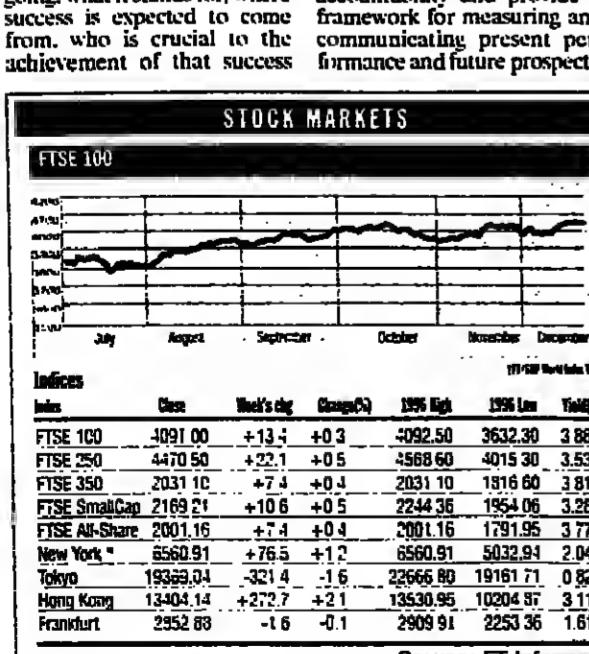
"Our nation's assets are being sold abroad, with profits being siphoned off overseas. The Government applauds this as inward investment - what a misuse of the English language."

Labour's survey, taken from official UK Balance of Payments statistics and a parliamentary answer by Greg Knight, the Trade Minister, shows that since 1985, the proportion of inward investment resulting from takeovers has risen steadily from 15 per cent to 61 per cent last year.

The figures come days after the US power generator, CalEnergy, won its bitterly contested £782m hostile takeover bid for Northern Electric. Other recent foreign takeovers of British companies include the agreed £1.3bn bid for East Midlands Electricity by Dominion Resources, the Virginian power supplier, Trafalgar House's acquisition by Kvaerner, the Scandinavian conglomerate, for more than £900m and the recommended deal for London Electricity by New Orleans-based Entergy for £1.3bn.

Analysts believe the inevitable further restructuring of UK utilities will lead to thousands of job cuts, although this would have been inevitable irrespective of who owned the companies concerned.

Mr Byers said: "The Government is constantly claiming inward investment creates jobs in Britain. That is certainly not the case when utilities are taken over by foreign firms."



مكالمات من الأصل

Wanted: a warts-and-all tally of UK's jobless

JOHN PHILPOTT

'Politicians will realise the electorate wants openness, not illusion. For now, let's raise a toast and wish a happy New Year and good job-hunting to Britain's 1.9 million unemployed. Or should that be 4 million?'

New Year 1997, the last Hogmanay before the hustings. We all know politicians are lousy at keeping promises but they can at least make resolutions. And what better than to resolve to reform Britain's approach to measuring unemployment. To some this may seem a rather arcane suggestion for the festive season, the kind of thing that provides a turn-on for none save a few sad amok-wavers.

However, when one reflects on the extent to which key macro-economic and employment policy decisions are based on job statistics, the importance of a clear picture of unemployment becomes self-evident. Yet, at present, the picture is anything but clear.

The Government may applaud the downward path in unemployment, which has taken the monthly count of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance below the politically sensitive 2 million mark. But the claimant count is widely mistrusted.

In 1995, the Royal Statistical Society called for a new monthly count to be derived from the 60,000 household-based Labour Force Survey (LFS) which provides a measure of unemployment based on an internationally agreed definition of what constitutes an employed jobseeker. But the LFS is conducted on a quarterly basis and the Treasury has ruled out the extra £8m a year needed to upgrade it (the Chancellor's fiscal rectitude on this matter being backed up by ministers at the Department for Education and Employment who, with the general election on their minds, are concerned by the fact that the level of unemployment as measured by the LFS is around 200,000 higher than the claimant count).

However, even if the Treasury were to relent, it is not clear whether the LFS measure alone is a totally reliable indicator of the extent of slack in the jobs market. For example, the standard LFS measure excludes people on the margins of the workforce who tell the LFS that they want jobs and might enter the market in good times. Moreover, the standard LFS measure may well understate the social distress caused by unemployment. Although derived from a

household survey, it measures unemployed individuals, whereas the social distress caused by unemployment may well depend upon the distribution of joblessness across households.

What is required, therefore, is a range of spectrum of unemployment measures that, when considered together, can provide a truly rounded account of Britain's unemployment problem.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics adopted such an approach in 1976 and, following a modification made in 1995, publishes six measures of unemployment based on its monthly equivalent of the LFS.

Now that the need for a range of inflation measures has been accepted in Britain – with the Treasury publishing RPI, RPX and RPY – why not also adopt the US-style spectrum approach to measuring unemployment?

This was precisely the question posed earlier this year by the House of Commons Select Committee on Employment, which called for a new approach to compiling the jobless figures. But the Government rejected this call, merely responding that it would be "keeping under review the need for more informative reporting of unemployment measures".

Faced with this official reticence, the Employment Policy Institute (EPI) has decided to construct its own range of unemployment measures in conjunction with the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics. These are published quarterly as part of a regular and wide-ranging Employment Audit of government jobs figures.

The EPI joblessness indicators – U1 to U5, available for the summer 1996 quarter – are shown in the chart. Although US thinking has influenced the EPI's approach the EPI indicators have been designed with the British labour market in mind. The first three

indicators focus on labour market slack. U1 is the standard measure of unemployment provided by the LFS and covers all economically active jobseekers. U2 includes in addition so-called "discouraged workers", ie people who do not seek jobs because they feel there are no jobs available.

U3 adds to the numbers in U1 and U2 those whose response to the LFS is merely that they want a job. This indicator includes all the people marginally attached to the labour market who might enter the market in buoyant times. It could be said to approximate to the number of jobs needed to create "full employment" in Britain.

The last three indicators are more akin to measures of social distress. U4 refers to the duration of job search and measures people who have been unemployed for more than six months. U5 moves away from an individually-based joblessness indicator to a household-based one.

U5 measures individuals living in households where no adult has a job, while U6 measures households where no adult has a job. The indicator excludes households where the head of household is beyond retirement age and those containing only students.

What do these indicators tell us about current levels of joblessness? Well, for a start, U3 shows that the number of jobless people who say they want a job is not the 1.9 million registered by the claimant count, but well over 4 million. Of course, caveats abound. There are undoubtedly people measured by U5 whose desire for work is not matched by any form of realism about the type of work they are likely to get. But U3 none the less points to a considerable "job shortfall" in Britain.

U1-U4 do broadly reflect the trend fall in unemployment registered by the claimant count. However, with regard to the "social distress" indicator U5, there has been no sign

of any corresponding reduction in the number of workless households. These account for almost one in five of all British households – up from well below one in ten years ago. Between the summer of 1994 and the summer of 1995 – the latest quarter for which U5 can be constructed – the number of such households increased by 250,000.

The EPI has an open mind on whether U1 to U5 are the most appropriate indicators and how they might be developed. Their purpose is as much to stimulate debate on a new approach as it is to offer the final word on measuring unemployment.

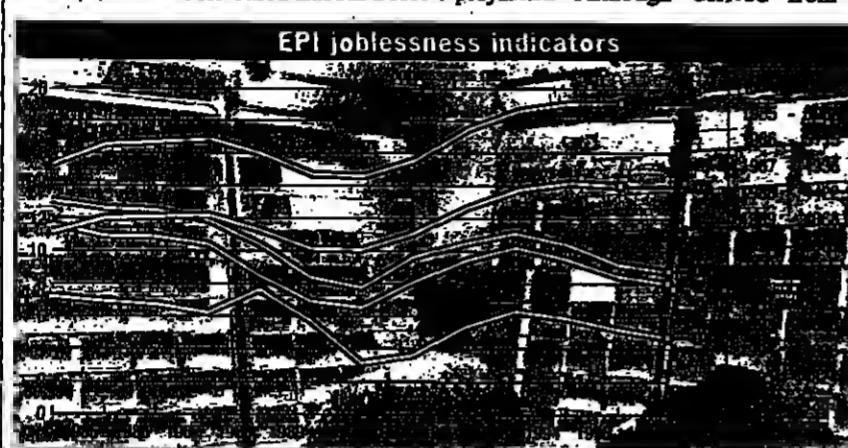
What is clear from these indicators, however, is that large numbers of jobless people, particularly those living in workless households, cannot find work even after four years of recovery in the labour market.

There is an urgent need for further policies to help them; and good policy-making requires a complete picture of the underlying jobs scene. In the short term, of course, it will be politically expedient for the present government to focus on the "good news" from the claimant count.

And there is as yet no guarantee that a Labour government would necessarily want to provide the British people with a warts-and-all account of the jobs market.

However, sooner or later the penny will drop and politicians will realise that what the electorate wants is openness, not illusion. For now, let's raise a toast and wish a happy New Year and good job-hunting to Britain's 1.9 million unemployed. Or should that be 4 million?

The writer is director of the Employment Policy Institute, an independent think-tank. The EPI Employment Audit is available as a quarterly subscription publication, priced p.a. from Employment Policy Institute, Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ.



Pearson's eyeball-counter focuses on a bigger prize

It has emphatically not been a good year for Pearson, the £7bn media and financial services conglomerate. But it hasn't been a half-bad one for the man who runs Europe's largest independent producer, Pearson Television – Greg Dyke.

Consider that Grundy Worldwide, the makers of *Neighbours*, produces soaps and game shows in Germany, Holland, Sweden and Italy and ten other countries. Or that Thames, makers of *The Bill*, are supplying popular programmes to ITV, cable and satellite channels and Channel 4. Or that SelectTV, the production company, is starting to export its award-winning formats to international markets, on the strength of hits like *Birds of a Feather*, *Lovejoy*, *Shine on Harvey Moon* and *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*.

"Two-thirds of our profits and half our revenues now come from overseas," Mr Dyke points out proudly. Revenues in the half-year ending June 1996 were £100m, up 66 per cent year on year. In 1997, the stakes get even higher, with the launch of the new Channel 5, in which Pearson Television has a 24 per cent stake, and for which it is a privileged supplier.

Pearson as a whole is a different story. Uneven profit performance, bad acquisition judgement, and mounting criticism over its corporate strategy have fuelled a year of takeover speculation and the early departure of the chairman and the managing director.

The differing fortunes of the group and one of its leading subsidiaries, one suspects, behind Mr Dyke's one-year-long refusal to do a major interview in the business press. Those close to him say he was just getting out of the job. But Pearson insiders

concede he was keeping his head down for another reason. Why annoy management at head office, who were fighting off unwanted attention, takeover talk and potholes from analysts, by appearing to take public credit for Pearson Television – Greg Dyke.

The silence was all the more necessary when speculation began to grow about Mr Dyke's fervent wish to form a buyout group to purchase the television subsidiary, Pearson, which is in the midst of a wide-ranging rethink about its strategy, has not ruled out the idea of spinning Pearson Television off to shareholders, or even selling it.

THE MONDAY INTERVIEW

GREG DYKE

Mr Dyke, a man of enormous attempt to diversify into the CD-Rom and electronic games market, through Mindscape of the US, brought nothing but misery to the management that masterminded the acquisition.

Last week, Mr Dyke re-surfaced. In an interview with *The Independent*, he happily discussed his wide range of responsibilities – Thames Television, SelectTV, and particularly Grundy Worldwide, the production company bought for £175m 18 months ago, as Mr Dyke's first big corporate move.

But he would not comment on the arguably more fascinating behind-the-scenes developments at corporate head office, not least the departure

of Frank Barlow, managing director, and Lord Blakenham, the chairman and last remaining Cowdray family representative on the board.

He is equally tight-lipped on the challenges facing Mr Barlow's successor, the US-born Marjorie Scardino, formerly chief executive of the *Economist* group. She is to begin the new year with a series of strategy meetings with senior management, including Mr Dyke, who sits on the main board.

"You're the one I am meant to like," Ms Scardino was overheard to say to Mr Dyke when they first met. The two ought to get along: both are cheerful, bright and unpretentious; neither likes the stilted, blue-blooded atmosphere at 3BG, as insiders have christened headquarters at 3 Burlington Gardens, central London.

Mr Dyke has thought it all through. "As broadcasting frag-

to give him what he wants – Pearson Television! The coming year will tell.

Meanwhile, Mr Dyke professes to like what he is doing.

He likes the risk and the rewards of taking Pearson into international markets, exploiting a stable of rights to popular programmes. "I'd rather be a rights-owner than a broadcaster," he declares, in what might be taken as his mantra.

In the future, Mr Dyke says, broadcasters will be less important. The real value will be generated by those who own the programmes.

Fragmenting audiences, the launch of digital TV and the growing demand for cheap, plentiful shows will conspire to give Pearson Television an advantage.

So why aren't the traditional broadcasters doing the same thing? "I came out of ITV, and certainly I can say that it is not the kind of business that encourages you to take risks," Mr Dyke says. "We have known about the challenges of digital, of rights, of new competition in broadcasting, and the need to expand overseas and on the Continent. But not one of them has done anything."

The other problem is that the traditional broadcasters are too stuck in their old ways. In the UK, you are not applauded for the popular programmes. The production process was captured by the intellectual elite."

In the end, the logic of the changes in UK television will mean broadcasters will want to expand more aggressively into programme-making and rights acquisition.

The monopoly is crumbling and broadcasters will have to own their product."

Mr Dyke has thought it all through. "As broadcasting frag-

ments, it becomes harder and harder to hold on to brands. The ones with the good names are worth their weight in gold. You couldn't afford to build *The Bill* from scratch today. Building the name will get harder."

"I guess what I am saying is that, logically, broadcasters need to look at owning a company like Pearson Television."

That's as close as he will come to conceding the company could well be bought one day, and not necessarily by him.

Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB has already looked carefully, aware

it needs to develop a true pres-

ence in British programming if it is to reduce its huge programme acquisition budget.

The big challenge in 1997 will be to get Channel 5 right. Mr Dyke will become chairman of Channel 5 Broadcasting in the New Year, and has been taking a close interest in the preparations for launch.

He has had to live down his infamous contention that the controversial door-to-door tuning exercise – necessary to ensure VCRs don't suffer interference from the signal – was nothing less than a "burglar's charter". "That was the most ex-

pensive comment I ever made," he says. "Just look at the security features we had to build in as a result of that quote!"

He says that he is unbothered by the rocketing costs of re-tuning, now estimated at £180m compared to just £55m in the Pearson-led Channel 5 bid. Part of that stems from the addition of 4 million new homes in areas that originally could not have received the signal.

"The extra retuning costs are not a problem for the shareholders, because the more eyeballs we can make," Mr Dyke says.

Not a bad set of challenges to keep a chief executive busy. A new channel, global acquisitions, the prospect of digital television by the end of 1997.

And in the midst of it all, a radical restructuring of Mr Dyke's parent company, perhaps even the demerger of the television operations.

Mr Dyke may be counting eyeballs for the new Channel 5, but his own eyes look focused on the bigger prize: growing Pearson Television, and one day perhaps owing part of it.

Matthew Horsman

Underwriter to float on AIM

JILL TREANOR

Hardy Underwriting Group, a Lloyd's of London underwriter, will join the Alternative Investment Market today in a £10.65 flotation.

While a few of the larger underwriters have stock market quotations, Hardy is unusual because it underwrites just one syndicate which is known as 382.

Peter Hardy, chief executive of Hardy Underwriting Group, said the listing could pave the way for other small underwriters. "I'm sure a lot of people are watching us. We were rather surprised we were first," he said.

Mr Hardy added the flotation was designed to encourage new names into the syndicate because they would know they could easily get in and out.

The complicated transaction involves Hardy Underwriting Group merging with Hardy Underwriting Agencies, the managing agent of syndicate 382. Hardy Underwriting

IN BRIEF

• The Institute of Directors has stepped up its attack on the possibility of Britain joining the single European currency in its New Year message to the organisation's 37,000 members. Tim Melville-Ross, IOD director-general, said UK participation in economic and monetary union would seriously damage competitiveness. He went on: "A decision to join a single currency in 1997 or at any other time in the foreseeable future would so constrain our economic freedom as to make it virtually impossible for us to compete successfully. We must continue to pursue our own independent economic policy within the single market."

• Venture capitalists seeking to invest in potential management buyouts are facing mounting financial hurdles, according to a survey by accountants KPMG. It says boom conditions in the market continued last year, with the total value of buyouts and buy-ins up from £6.7bn to £6.77bn, though the value of deals worth more than £10m each fell slightly. The number of deals recorded increased to 600 in 1995. However, Mike Stevens, head of MBOs at KPMG, said buyouts were becoming more expensive due to strong competition among venture capitalists. "It's becoming increasingly difficult to find underpriced deals and there is always the danger of institutions overpaying in the race to win trophy buyouts. But with inflation and interest rates remaining subdued, the real rates of return offered by MBOs – albeit at a higher risk – are still attractive."

• Biff, the banking union, called on MPs to amend a private Bill allowing the formal merger between Lloyds Bank and TSB to include a clause giving customers the power to keep branches open. Biff claimed that without such an amendment 650 branches might close and up to 10,000 jobs lost, in addition to the 1,000 head office posts that are to go because of the merger of head office functions.

• B&Q, the DIY giant owned by Kingfisher Group, confirmed that it is to create 1,800 jobs at five new warehouse outlets around the country, half of them part-time posts. The outlets will open in Coventry, Wallasey, in Merseyside; Bury, near Manchester; and Stockton-on-Tees, in Cleveland.

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The Dorchester Plan

Pick of the Day

Element of Doubt

9pm ITV

Pretty good corn is this thriller by David Pirie, the sort of corn, in fact, that's just right for the time of year. Nigel Havers, an actor who hasn't been much in evidence of late, turns up playing one of his charming rascals - this one a smiling but irresponsible property speculator who suddenly and suspiciously turns into a perfect husband to Gina McKee (she of *Our Friends in the North* fame). Switch off and enjoy.



Today's television and radio

BBC 1

- 7.00 News, Weather (2431301). 7.10 Joe 90 (7545108). 7.35 The Busy World of Richard Scarry (1650585). 8.00 News, Weather (5099740). *
8.10 Children's BBC: Barney. 8.15 Peter Pan. *8.35 The Legend of Prince Valiant.
9.00 News, Regional News and Weather (3638092). *
9.05 Children's BBC: Incredible Games. 9.30 Record Breakers. *10.00 Playdays. 10.20 William's Wish Wellingtons.
10.30 ■■■ The Barefoot Executive (Robert Butler 1971 US). Disney offering about a chimp which can guess which TV shows will get good ratings (some sort of satiric intended, one supposes) and starring a young Kurt Russell (2380503). *
12.05 The Muppets (2149894). 12.30 Wipeout (97653). 1.00 News and Weather (99176856). *
1.13 Local News and Weather (82675450). 1.15 Neighbours (58645276). 1.35 Neighbours: 10th Anniversary Special (2465547). 2.15 The World's Strongest Man (196491). *
2.45 ■■■ The Boy Who Could Fly (Nick Castle 1986 US). As the title says, Kidde face staring, Jay Underwood and Bonnie Bedelia (95665924). *
4.30 Children's BBC: The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends. 4.45 Newsround Review of the Year. *
5.25 The BIZ. *
5.50 Neighbours (S) (620905). *
6.15 News and Weather (430112). *
6.30 Regional News Magazine (696769).
6.45 Winter on One. BBC self-plug (S) (485740).
6.50 This Is Your Life (S) (388653). *
7.30 A Monkey for All Seasons. David Attenborough meets Japan's macaque monkeys, the world's most northerly primate (R) (S) (189). *
8.00 EastEnders: Grant and Tiffany marriage meltdown grief (S) (50111). *
8.30 Chef Rochele invites Gareth to Paris (S) (1818). *
9.00 News, Local News, Weather (9818). *
9.30 ■■■ Death Becomes Her (Robert Zemeckis 1992 US). Present and former loves of plastic surgeon Bruce Willis - Meryl Streep and Goldie Hawn - bitch it out in this enjoyable enough special effects extravaganza. The SFX are courtesy of the fact that witch Isabella Rossellini knows the secret of eternal youth and beauty (S) (862585). *
11.05 Review 96. Justin Webb reviews the year's major news stories (S) (531352).
12.25 Mrs Merton Show Christmas Special. Faux-senior citizen-cum-chat show hostess Caroline Aherne talks to Slade frontman Noddy Holder and Irish singer Daniel O'Donnell (R) (S) (2823290). *
12.55 ■■■ Billion Dollar Brain (Ken Russell 1967 UK). Russell managed to kill off the Michael Caine/Harry Palmer espionage series (following on from *The Ipcress File* and *Final Peril in Berlin*) by making it so climax-heavy that audiences couldn't really take it in what was going on (something about a special assignment to Finland), Tosh (925832). *
2.40 Weather (8509035). To 2.45am.

BBC 2

- 7.10 The Phil Silvers Show (R) (7936450). 7.35 Going Hollywood (R) (3376789).
8.50 ■■■ Command Decision (Sam Wood 1948) Clark Gable stars as an Allied officer assigned the task of bombing strategic targets deep within Germany. Walter Pidgeon and Van Johnson feature their seethes (4053769).
10.40 Eisenhower, Soldier. First in a two-parter about the soldier-President (3559769).
11.45 The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures. More from Professor Simon Conway Morris about the history of life on Earth (S) (770830). *
12.45 Clash of the Titans. Cricket's 1981 Ashes series remembered (R) (S) (3854547). *
1.25 The Essential Olympics. Recalls the Olympic Games from 1968 to 1992 (8183586).
2.45 The Car's the Star: The Triumph Herald (R) (S) (3878653). *
3.05 Great Railway Journeys. From Derry to Kerry with Michael Palin (R) (S) (2872924). *
4.00 Love on a Branch Line. 1/4. Another chance to see this enjoyable period comedy drama based on John Hadfield's novel, and starring Michael Maloney and Leslie Phillips (R) (S) (513455). *
4.50 ■■■ Brief Encounter (David Lean 1945 US). See Film of the Day (28/6827). *
6.15 ■■■ The Witches (Nicole Kidman 1990 UK). At times quite scary (Dario Argento adaptation in which a youngster's seaside holiday turns into a nightmare when he discovers the hotel he is staying in is the venue for a witches' convention). Starring Anjelica Huston, Rowan Atkinson and Mal Zetterling (975301). *
7.45 An Audience with Charles Dickens. Simon Callow concludes his series by reading the story of Dr Marigold - a hugely popular Christmas tale in the 1850s but now virtually forgotten (S) (345160). *
8.30 Changing Rooms (S) (2160).
9.00 The Moonstone. 2/2. Concluding the Wilkie Collins adaptation, and the eponymous diamond continues to haunt everyone who comes into contact with it (S) (3997108). *
10.05 Have I Got News for You. Highlights (205653). *
10.35 ■■■ El Matador (Robert Rodriguez 1992 US). This 'Spanish lingo crime meller', as Variety puts it, is certainly the cheapest movie ever picked by a Hollywood studio (it apparently cost \$7,000). Carlos Gallardo stars as a Mexican travelling musician who gets mistaken for a hit man. Simply done - and rather charming (S) (9741585).
11.55 Alanis Morissette in Concert (S) (758092).
12.55 ■■■ The Curse of the Cat People (Robert Wise/Gunther von Fritsch 1944 US). Follow-up to the atmospheric shocker is a flawed and ambitious stab at child psychology (not, apparently, what the studio ordered), in which the husband from the first film (Kurt Smith) remarries and then fears that his child is under the influence of his former wife, the partner woman, Simon Simon (559556).
2.05 Weather (9741752). To 2.10am.

ITV/London

- 6.00 GMTV (7330769). 9.25 Santa Piggies (4268740). 9.50 Step by Step (2226837).
10.20 Local News (3114450). 10.25 Local News (3113721).
10.30 ■■■ Black Beauty (James Hill 1971 UK/Sweden). Anna Sewell's child-and-horse classic given a curvy run-around with Mark Lester as the dusky nag's young owner. Patrick Mower is in there somewhere (5017788). *
12.20 Your Shout (2276053). 12.25 Local News (3626504). 12.30 News (9156214). 12.55 Local News (9131905). *
1.25 ■■■ The First Great Train Robbery (Michael Crichton 1978 US). Sean Connery and Donald Sutherland plan to rob a British Army payroll train during the Crimean War in this attempt to recreate the *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* mixture of comedy and excitement (S) (58191672). *
3.20 News (731924). 3.25 Local News (7553295).
3.30 ■■■ Big Foot (Danny Huston 1987 US). Two children on a camping trip are captured by a group of eight-foot-tall footless creatures, who are in turn being pursued by ruthless hunters. Director is the son of John Huston (273585).
5.10 Home and Away Special (R) (S) (7710837). *
5.40 News (Weather) (428237). *
5.55 Your Shout (R) (353382). *
6.00 London Tonight (Followed by Weather) (721). *
6.30 London Bridge (S) (301).
7.00 Wish You Were Here? Mary Nightingale in Marrakech; Judith Chalmers on Fiji and Martin Roberts drives round Earth's most beautiful countries (S) (1059). *
7.30 Coronation Street. Grim news for Liz McDonald and au revoir Curly (585).
8.00 Now We're Talking. Phillip Schofield and celebs from both sides of the Atlantic talk about communication breakdown. You owe it to yourself to stay clear (S) (5721). *
9.00 Element of Doubt. See Pick of the Day (S) (5308).
11.15 Local News, Weather (715295). *
11.25 Jeff Green. Live! The comedian recorded live at Her Majesty's Theatre in London (314672).
12.10 The Beatles Anthology. The moptops film *Let It Be*, jam on top of Apple's London offices, and decide, 'Call it a day' (R) (S) (4121940). *
1.10 Nationwide Football League Extra (7555412).
1.55 Not Fade Away. Bonnie Tyler's desert island discs - and they include Tina Turner, Bryan Adams and Meat Loaf. Someone has to... (S) (401764).
2.55 Licence to Drive (Greg Peaman 1988 US). Teenager Cory Hall promises the girl of his dreams he will take her out in his grandfather's treasured car - despite having just failed his driving test. Ho, ho, ho (S) (911306).
4.30 Recollections. Jazz (S) (9962528).
5.30 Funny Business (R) (S) (1135615).
5.55 James Bond Jnr (S) (1116238).
5.55 News (1119325). To 6.00am.

Film of the Day

Brief Encounter

4.50pm BBC2

Noel Coward probably had as much idea of what it was to be as in fact, that's just right for the time of year. Nigel Havers, an actor who hasn't been much in evidence of late, turns up playing one of his charming rascals - this one a smiling but irresponsible property speculator who suddenly and suspiciously turns into a perfect husband to Gina McKee (she of *Our Friends in the North* fame). Switch off and enjoy.

ITV/Regions

- 6.20 Sesame Street (3500652).
7.15 The Babyshambles (S) (2226837).
7.50 Stunt Dance (S) (2226837).
8.15 Little Shop (R) (7455011).
8.35 Where on Earth? Captain San Diego? (647824).
9.00 The Big Breakfast (34740).
10.00 Hangin' With Mr Cooper (R) (S) (55276). *
10.30 The Crystal Maze (U) (S) (770837).
11.30 Back to the Future (R) (S) (5733843). *
11.55 The Pink Panther (R) (S) (5208130).
12.20 God in the House. Raving Christians (5647419). *
12.50 ■■■ Twist (Robin Mann 1992 Can.). Documentary about the dance craze that swept early 1960s America (3451905). *
2.20 ■■■ Silk Stockings (Rouben Mamoulian 1957 US). A stiff, to say the least, version of the Cole Porter Broadway musical based on the 1939 Greta Garbo film *Ninotchka*. Leggy Greta Garbo is the KGB agent sent to stop a Russian composer in self-imposed exile. Paris who has agreed to write material for a Hollywood film. Then she finds herself falling for the playboy producer of the movie. Fred Astaire, Peter Lorre and Jules Munshin are in the ensemble cast, all the actors might just as well have been in *Wuthering Heights* (88155585).
4.30 Countdown (S) (301).
5.00 American Family (S) (301). (S) (35189). *
6.30 Hollywood (S) (301).
7.00 News. What's On (S) (301).
7.30 Just Dancing Around? The last in this series coupling him directions with contemporary dance choreographies is a pastel duet between director Mark Kidel and Richard Alston, veteran British modernist from the Ballet Rambar and London Contemporary Dance Theatre. Tai-Chi and Merce Cunningham are revealed as sources (S) (38127). *
8.30 A Woman of Independent Means. 1/3. Imported mini-series with a 70-year historical span and a cast led by Sally Field, Brenda Fricker and Charles Durning. Based on the novel by Elizabeth Forsyth Hailey, it tells of a southern belle (Field) growing up with the 20th century. Part one takes us to World War One, and it all continues on New Year's Day (S) (6404294). *
10.10 Homicide: Life on the Street (S) (225493). *
11.10 Dealers. Jean-Luc Leclerc documentary centring on the controversial business areas and their dealers (S) (5136399). *
12.35 ■■■ The G-Man (William Keighley 1935 US). Warner Brothers' spin-off melodrama starring James Cagney as a lawyer turned FBI agent who single-handedly takes on the entire Mob to avenge the death of an old schoolfriend (471591).
2.10 ■■■ Invisible Stripes (Lloyd Bacon 1940 US). Unemployed ex-con George Raft returns to life of crime to prevent his younger brother making the same mistakes he did. Humphrey Bogart, William Holden and Jane Bryant are also involved in this morality tale (5629696), To 3.35am.

Radio

Radio 1

- 8.00am Kevin Greening 12.00
Dave Pearce 3.00 Mark Goodier
7.00 Newsbeat Review 96 8.00
Priority Night Extravaganza 12.00
Mary Anne Hobbs 4.00-8.00am
Charlie Jordan

Radio 2

- 8.00am Billie Holiday 7.30
Sarah Young 9.30 Alex Lester
11.30 Jimmy Young 1.30 Debbie Thrower 3.30 Ed Stewart 5.05
John Dunn's Best of the Guests 7.00
7.00 Radio 2 1.30 7.30 8.00am
8.00am A Big Band Special 9.00
First Lady of Jazz 10.00 No Minor Chords 10.30 Vintage Christmases: The Emerald Affair 11.00 Bob Harris 1.00 Adrian Ralston 3.00-
6.00am Steve Madden

Radio 3

- 8.00am Lester 1.30
9.00 Morning Collection 10.00 Musical Encounters 12.00 Composer of the Week Leonard Bernstein 1.00 News, Chopin by Arrangement 2.00 The BBC Orchestras 3.45 Voices 4.30 Lester 1.30 7.30 8.00am In the Studio 9.00-10.00 No Minor Chords 10.30 Vintage Christmases: The Emerald Affair 11.00 Bob Harris 1.00 Adrian Ralston 3.00-6.00am Steve Madden

Radio 4

- 8.00am Kevin Greening 12.00
Dave Pearce 3.00 Mark Goodier
7.00 Newsbeat Review 96 8.00
Priority Night Extravaganza 12.00
Mary Anne Hobbs 4.00-8.00am
Charlie Jordan

Choice

- Russell Hoban's fable *Riddley Walker* (7.45pm R4) takes place thousands of years in the future - when some unnamed apocalypse has left behind a peculiarly wrecked caricature of our own civilisation. The Book at Bedtime (10.45pm R4) is Stendhal's *Scarlet and Black*, read by new heart-throb Greg Wise (left).



- earlier this month in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, by the Academy of Ancient Music, director Paul Goodwin.
9.05 Said Short Stories 9.10 The BBC Orchestras, Tan Dun: Death and Fire - Dialogue with Paul Keay, Chou Wen-Chung, Landscapes, Vassar: Offrandes. 10.00 Ensemble 10.45 Music in Mind. Mark Russell and Robert Sandall talk New York avant-garde vocalists/composer Shelley Hirsch.
11.30 Composer of the Week: Tchaikovsky.
12.30 Jazz Notes.
1.00 Through the Night. 1.01 Julianne Borne (soprano), Bamberg Symphony Chorus and Orchestra/Horst Stein, Bruckner: Te Deum; Symphony No 9 in D minor. 2.30 Members of the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra.
3.30 Spanish Music in Goya's Time. 5.00-6.00am Sequence.

- Radio 4 6.45am-9.00am 9.00am-11.00am 11.00am-1.00pm 1.00pm-2.00pm 2.00pm-3.00pm 3.00pm-4.00pm 4.00pm-5.00pm 5.00pm-6.00pm 6.00pm-7.00pm 7.00pm-8.00pm 8.00pm-9.00pm 9.00pm-10.00pm 10.00pm-11.00pm 11.00pm-12.00am 12.00am-1.00am 1.00am-2.00am 2.00am-3.00am 3.00am-4.00am 4.00am-5.00am 5.00am-6.00am 6.00am-7.00am 7.00am-8.00am 8.00am-9.00am 9.00am-10.00am 10.00am-11.00am 11.00am-12.00am 12.00am-1.00pm 1.00pm-2.00pm 2.00pm-3.00pm 3.00pm-4.00pm 4.00pm-5.00pm 5.00pm-6.00pm 6.00pm-7.00pm 7.00pm-8.00pm 8.00pm-9.00pm 9.00pm-10.00pm 10.00pm-11.00pm 11.00pm-12.00am 12.00am-1.00am 1.00am-2.00am 2.00am-3.00am 3.00am-4.00am 4.00am-5.00am 5.00am-6.00am 6.00am-7.00am 7.00am-8.00am 8.00am-9.00am 9.00am-10.00am 10.00am-11.00am 11.00am-12.00am 12.00am-1.00pm 1.00pm-2.00pm 2.00pm-3.00pm 3.00pm-4.00pm 4.00pm-5.00pm 5.00pm-6.00pm 6.00pm-7.00pm 7.00pm-8.00pm 8.00pm-9.00pm 9.00pm-10.00pm 10.00pm-11.00pm 11.00pm-12.00am 12.00am-1.00am 1.00am-2.00am 2.00am-3.00am 3.00am-4.00am 4.00am-5.00am 5.00am-6.00am 6.00am-7.00am 7.00am-8.00am 8.00am-9.00am 9.00am-10.00am 10.00am-11.00am 11.00am-12.00am 12.00am-1.00pm 1.00pm-2.00pm 2.00pm-3.00pm 3.00pm-4.00pm 4.00pm-5.00pm 5.00pm-6.00pm 6.00pm-7.00pm 7.00pm-8.00pm 8.00pm-9.00pm 9.00pm-10.00pm 10.00pm-11.00pm 11.00pm-12.00am 12.00am-1.00am 1.00am-2.00am 2.00am-3.00am 3.00am-4.00am 4.00am-5.00am 5.00am-6.00am 6.00am-7.00am 7.00am-8.00am 8.00am-9.00am 9.00am-10.00am 10.00am-11.00am 11.00am-12.00am 12.00am-1.00pm 1.00pm-2.00pm 2.00pm-3.00pm 3.00pm-4.00pm 4.00pm-5.00pm 5.00pm-6.00pm 6.00pm-7.00pm 7.00pm-8.00pm 8.00pm-9.00pm 9.00pm-10.00pm 10.00pm-11.00pm 11.00pm-12.00am 12.00am-1.00am 1.00am-2.00am 2.00am-3.00am 3.00am-4.00am 4.00am-5.00am 5.00am-6.00am 6.00am-7.00am 7.00am-8.00am 8.00am-9.00am 9.00am-10.00am 10.00am-11.00am 11.00am-12.00am 12.00am-1.00pm 1.00pm-2.00pm 2.00pm-3.00pm 3.00pm-4.00pm 4.00pm-5.00pm 5.00pm-6.00pm 6.00pm-7.00pm 7.00pm-8.00pm 8.00pm-9.00pm 9.00pm-10